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ABSTRACT

Dialogue journals can increase hearing impaired students' interest in reading and writing and help them learn to think of written language as a natural and important way to communicate thoughts and feelings. The journals should work as a form of conversation, with the student and teacher equal partners in the dialogue. The teacher does not comment on grammar, spelling, or other academic aspects of the student's writing, but responds only to the content of the message itself. Illustrated with pages taken from dialogue journals written by students of various ages, this guide discusses: (1) how to start the dialogue; (2) how to deal with problems such as a student who only gives one-word answers, who just draws pictures, who writes about the same topic every day, etc.; and (3) how dialogue journals can benefit students. In a series of practice exercises, the reader's responses to sample students' entries can be compared with the original teacher's response. The final chapter reviews the research on this approach to whole-language learning. Appendices describe procedures for obtaining consent and present longer examples of teacher-student dialogue. (JDD)

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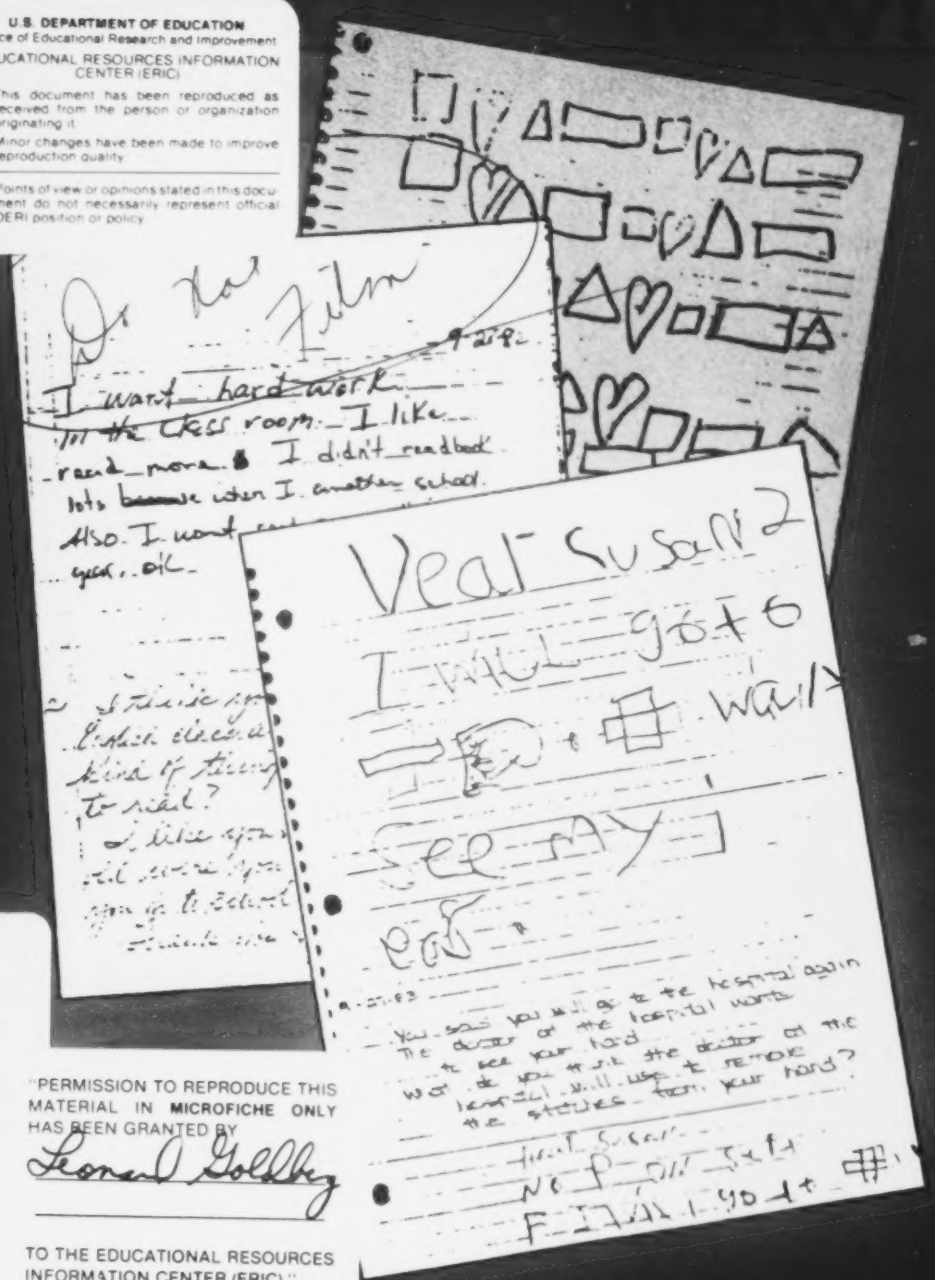

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It's Your Turn Now!

Using Dialogue Journals with Deaf Students

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Wanted!

- A natural way to involve students in functional, meaningful reading and writing.
- Requiring no commercial or teacher made materials, and no lesson planning.
- Effective for students from diverse language backgrounds, abilities, and age levels.
- Completely individualized to meet students' needs.
- Rewarding and highly motivating for students and teachers alike.

Here's the solution: Dialogue Journals!

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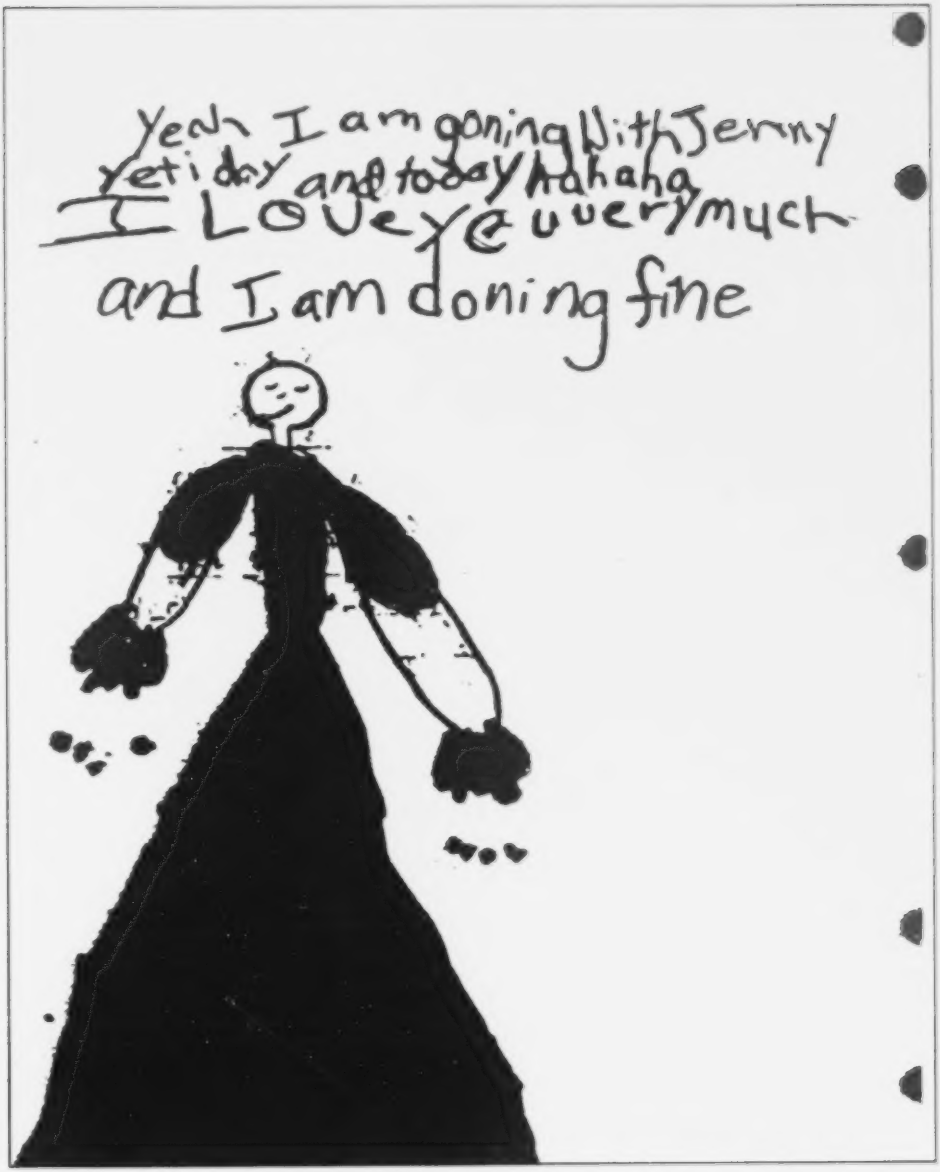

Yeah I am goning With Jenny
yeti day and today hahaha
I LOVEY@ uvery much
and I am doning fine

Chapter 1

Introduction

Every good teacher dreams of a technique that will increase students' interest in reading and writing, and will help them learn to think of written language as a natural and important way to communicate thoughts, information, feelings, and ideas. Used with skill and common sense, dialogue journals can do all those things. They work well for every student who shows a readiness to begin reading and writing (usually five years and older). They offer a way for students to enjoy using written language for communication. They can be useful in residential and day schools for deaf students as well as in mainstream programs. They can also give students and teachers a continuing basis for friendship, trust, and understanding—all through the use of written language.

Dialogue journals function as a welcome part of the classroom day. At the beginning of the semester, each student gets a personalized notebook to be used exclusively as a private journal. At least once a day, each student writes a message to the classroom teacher, using the journal notebook. By the next day, the teacher responds, returning the dialogue journals to their owners or to a central, agreed-upon place. The student reads the teacher's comments and writes another entry to continue the dialogue.

Dear Jean
I wach An You
I want new your and
Go To me I Like you
Go Be To me
96 I love you, too, Andy.
Who do you see in New York?
When will you go to New York?
I'm sure you will have fun!
Ouqng and
Kine
A Queen and A king? Wow!

Students introduce most of the topics discussed in the journals.

Each journal should work as a form of conversation, with the student and the teacher equal partners in the dialogue, getting to know each other better through use of a wide range of language functions. The teacher does not comment on grammar, spelling, or other academic aspects of the student's writing, but responds only to the content of the message itself. In a successful dialogue journal, each partner will provide information, ask questions, tell stories, critique the day's events, and make complaints, requests, and promises.

Especially in the beginning, students are encouraged to introduce most of the topics discussed in their journals. When they respond, teachers can use those topics to share their own thoughts and ideas. Unlike other kinds of classroom writing, dialogue journals are functional and interactive. Students know that their writing will not be corrected or graded, giving them more freedom to express themselves accurately. The benefits are obvious: when students think through and write about their own experiences, ideas, and questions, self-directed learning takes place. Pages taken from dialogue journals written by students of different ages show a rich mixture of topic discussion and functional uses of language.

The Origins of Dialogue Journals

Dialogue journal communication is not new. Developed by teachers, the process has been used with hearing students for more than 20 years. In 1979, Leslee Reed, a teacher in California, began sharing her dialogue journal experience with a group of educational researchers. Mrs. Reed had been corresponding with hearing students in her classes for many years, and believed the journals were a valuable aid to teacher/student relationships and to improving student reading and writing skills. She felt they were universally effective in encouraging students to communicate through written English, whether it was a first or second language.

In 1980, the National Institute of Education funded the first of two research projects to study Mrs. Reed's use of dialogue journals. And in 1982, Dr. William Stokoe (then of the Linguistics Research Laboratory, Gallaudet College Research Institute) asked Dr. Jana Staton, the

New Jersey... 5 hours in a car! Yuch!
WOW! I could not B lived it!
yuch!

3/1 I agree. I am going up to Connecticut in two weeks (for the weekend). That is about a 9 or 10 hour drive! So Dave and I decided that we would prefer to fly. So, we'll be taking a plane up there. It will be about a 1½ hour flight. Much better.
Have you ever flown in a plane?

NO Never flown in plane
Because I Never touch a plane
Before When would you take
a girl in your class not Boys,
Boys is on Later girls only
When will I sleep over at
your house When tell me

3/1 We will have to decide who sleeps over my house and when they should come over together. All children (and me) must be here at the same time. Today we're

Children acquire language naturally through interaction with others.

researcher for the first NIE grant, to come to Gallaudet and work with teachers to initiate use of dialogue journals with deaf students.

From 1982 to 1985, the Gallaudet Research Institute provided consultation for teachers and support for studies of dialogue journal use. This manual is a culmination of that project. During these three years, Gallaudet students from primary through college age have shared dialogue journals with their teachers, using written English as functionally and meaningfully as face-to-face communication.

Learning through Communication

The use of dialogue journals with deaf students is a natural way to develop their competence in reading and writing English, whether it is considered a first or second language. There is strong theoretical support for interactive writing as an aid to learning, based on what researchers know about the way children acquire language through interaction with others (Cazden, 1983; Goodman, 1984; Smith, 1984).

All users of language participate in communicative interaction before they can produce meaningful words and phrases or even understand fully what is happening. Infants converse with adults, making themselves understood through gestures and sounds, long before they learn the appropriate linguistic symbols to represent their thoughts and needs.

That universal approach to communicative learning is clearly demonstrated by the parallels between children who learn ASL as a first language and those whose first language is spoken. If a child cries, the parent communicates, "Oh, you're hungry" (or wet, or whatever is appropriate). When the child points to a ball, the parent communicates, "Does Baby want the ball? Here is the red ball." That meaningful use of words or signs in their natural form and context makes it possible for infants to learn to communicate competently in their first language.

A similar process takes place in the dialogue journal, starting at whatever level of reading and writing the student has achieved and raising that level through natural, pressure-free interaction. The easy conversational flow of the dialogue journals makes it possible for students to communicate successfully with more experienced users of written language.

Caution: It's Not for Everyone

Unlike more standard instructional methods, the dialogue journal does not work for all teachers, and it should never be required of teachers as a part of curricula. The dialogue journal is more than the practice of writing back and forth in a bound notebook; that's only the visible part. The journals symbolize a communicative process that depends on the involvement of both student and teacher; and what makes them effective is the mind and language of an interested and committed teacher.

Teachers who have used dialogue journals successfully at Gallaudet and elsewhere all volunteered to try it for themselves. When enthusiastic administrators have required the use of dialogue journals, rather than presenting it as an option, the dialogues have not worked. Some teachers know instinctively that this kind of communication is not for them, and wisely choose other ways to establish communication with their students.

The success of dialogue journals, therefore, depends on the teacher's enthusiasm and motivation. Principals and supervisors who want to encourage their use should stress the voluntary nature of the process, letting teachers initiate the project in their own way, when they feel ready.

Chapter II

Starting the Dialogue

One of the best things about dialogue journals is that they can be used by just about anyone who works with children, provided the child is old enough to understand that writing can be a meaningful form of communication. That means that most children age five and older can begin using dialogue journals to communicate with their teachers, even if they are still mostly in the drawing stage.

The main goal for teachers should be the establishment of private, personal written communication with individual students. Although the journals have many peripheral benefits, particularly for deaf children (exposure to correct English writing and practical use of reading and writing skills, among others) they should not be used as a substitute for the regular English curriculum. They can, however, serve as excellent supplements for the usual classwork in English.

How to Begin Communicating

For the most part, it is best to introduce dialogue journals on the first day of class, at the beginning of the school year. For very young children, the teacher might find a time when something exciting is about to happen. A party, a holiday, even the beginning of a new semester can offer the children a ready-made subject to write about. If journals are introduced as an important

way to communicate about something that really matters, students will tend to remain interested for a longer period of time.

Not all students in a class have to begin writing in dialogue journals on the same day. Some teachers prefer to start with one or two eager correspondents, then add more as they show interest in the process. Starting gradually can also give teachers a chance to practice the skill and adjust to the routine of writing in dialogue journals.

Using dialogue journals is a basically simple process. Before you start, you will need to make a few decisions based on your daily schedule and the class workload. Set up a regular time for your students to read and write in their journals, and decide how often you will exchange messages. One good general rule is that communication should take place frequently and regularly, with messages exchanged at least three to five times every week.

Be sure to schedule a quiet time and place every day to respond to your students' entries. If you are rushed, you will miss important cues, and even more significantly, you will not have time to enjoy the communication. Dialog journals can provide a lot of hidden information that can be very useful in helping you plan lessons and understand day-to-day behavior. Once you become familiar with this kind of communication, you may want to combine responding to your students with planning the next day's lessons. Most teachers who have worked with dialogue journals for a while say that it really doesn't take much time.

With younger children, you will need to decide where the dialogue journals should be kept. Instead of asking students to hand them in like homework, agree on a special place in the classroom where students can put them safely and retrieve them whenever they have time. Keeping the journals in sight, in a designated place, and readily available to their owners will help demonstrate their importance.

Another decision involves the selection and purchase of notebooks to be used for dialogue journals. The books should be securely bound, and a comfortable size and shape. Notebooks that are too thick may discourage children who expect to be able to fill them up by the end of the semester. Lines on the sheets should be widely spaced to accommodate developing handwriting or drawings. The books should be durable enough to last for the full year or semester; some students may need hard plastic bindings, while others can use paper covers without destroying the books.

The First Day

With all those decisions made, you are ready to begin using dialogue journals with your students. Even if you plan to start with only one or two, it is probably a good idea to introduce the concept to the whole group. This lets all the children know that whenever they (or you) are ready to begin, there is an exciting new way to communicate with their teacher—in print!

> Lesson Plan: Introduction of Dialogue Journals
> Time: Discussion, 20 minutes; writing, 10 minutes.

One day at the beginning of a new school year Terry, a teacher at the Spring Lake School, decides to introduce the concept of dialogue journals to her students. She starts by writing the words DIALOGUE JOURNAL on the board and asking her students to guess their meaning. She makes sure students understand that dialogue means communication between two people.

To emphasize that definition, Terry asks a group of students to role-play conversations. One role-play is an ordinary dialogue, with two people agreeing to meet for a movie. In a second role-play, the two people do not understand each other at all, and Terry points out why the second encounter is no dialogue. Then Terry asks her class to brainstorm the different ways people communicate: signing, talking, facial expressions, gestures, telephone or TDD, writing, and so on.

The class also discusses the meaning of the word journal. They define it as a kind of diary in which people write regularly, noting things that happen every day and expressing their own thoughts. When Terry is sure her students understand the two concepts, dialogue and journal, she has them put the words together. She makes sure they understand that a dialogue journal is a private book between two people; in this case teacher and student. Even with primary students, the guarantee of privacy is crucial to developing trust.

Terry gives her class some information about dialogue journals and what she hopes to accomplish.

- This is a good way for her, as a teacher, to get to know all the students as individuals, to understand their thinking, and to share ideas.

- Dialogue journals help teachers learn more about their students so they can be sure they are teaching things students need to know in ways they fully understand.

- Every individual is different, with different interests and skills, so whatever people want to discuss in their dialogue journals is fine.

Terry does NOT emphasize her expectation that the dialogue journals will help students improve their English language skills, even though it is true. It is far better for students to focus on the "Let's talk" aspect of the journals. The class might brainstorm likely topics: schoolwork, family, friends, books, movies, travel plans, or other available subject matter.

Finally, Terry hands out the notebooks to her students and asks them to write their names on the covers and number at least the first 10 pages. Numbering is especially important for very young children, who may need more reinforcement in the concept of writing in a book. Upper elementary and secondary students should also start by dating their entries.

Together, Terry and the class set up guidelines: how often they will write to each other, when and where the

writing will take place, and where the books should be kept. Then the students write their first entries and leave the books in place for Terry to read and respond.

How to Respond

Now suppose you decide to introduce your students to dialogue journals. You have followed all the steps listed above, your students have written their first entries, and here you sit with a pile of notebooks to read and answer. You open the first one, read the message, and suddenly feel nervous about the task you have taken on. "How can I be sure I'll answer correctly?"

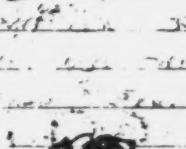
The first rule is to relax and enjoy yourself. Each notebook represents a dialogue between you and one other person, a way to communicate freely with just one student in your class. And just as there is no one way to carry on a conversation, there is no right or wrong way to respond to an entry in the journal. A few basic guidelines, however, will facilitate open communication (the primary goal) and may even challenge the student's language skills (a nice secondary benefit).

- Use natural, conversational language. It may be helpful to keep reminding yourself that you are writing to a friend.

- Don't write in letter format. Starting with "Dear ----", and closing with "sincerely" is too formal, and likely to interfere with the conversational process. A good dialogue consists of a series of discussions, each made up of several exchanges on the same topic. The letter format can lead students to think that they should bring up new topics for each entry.

- Your entries should be about as long as the student's. Very short answers don't sustain the dialogue, and may make students think you have little interest in communicating. Long answers may be intimidating; you don't want to dominate the conversation.

The Match Jog Suit
and ear rings and candy Land.



Love Gloria,

1-4-85 Wow! You got some nice Christmas presents!
What did your mother and father give you for Christmas? Jeans

1-5-85 I like your new blue jeans!

Candy Land, and
I Love Your earrings.

Respond to the student's message first.

- Respond directly to the student's message first. This shows your respect for what your partner has to say. Save new or related subjects for the end of your entry.

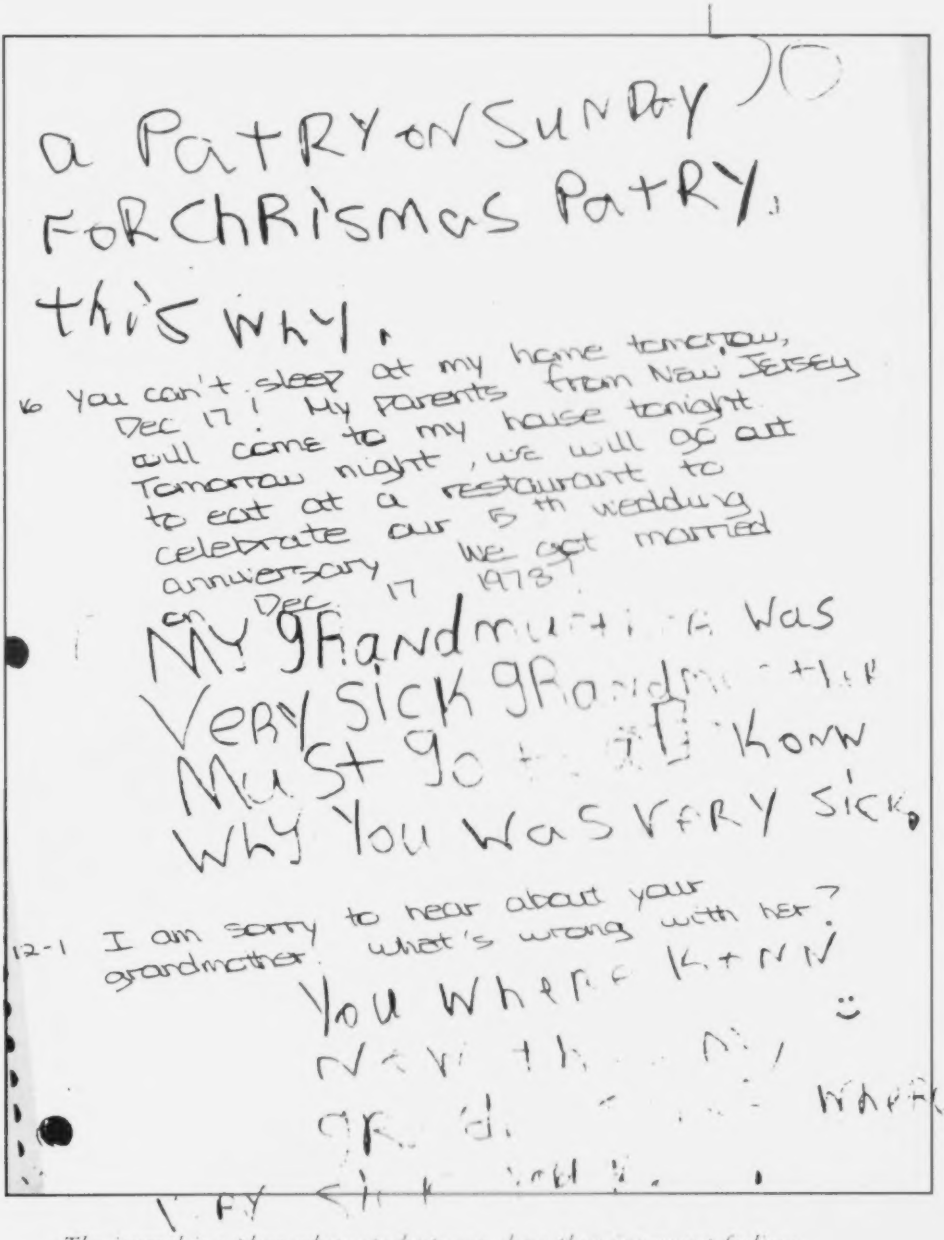
- Sharing personal feelings and experiences usually prompts a greater response from students. It also establishes rapport and lets them know that they are also welcome to share their feelings.

- Ask questions only if you are really interested in the answers, not because you feel it's your job. Yes or no questions will usually yield only one-word responses; it is better to use polite directives: That sounds interesting; tell me more about it, or I'm curious. What else happened? Be careful not to overwhelm the student with a lot of consecutive questions.

- Be as honest as possible with your students. If you do not know the answer to a question, or feel uncomfortable discussing a subject the student has brought up, say so and give the reasons for your response. Students should also feel comfortable being straightforward with you.

As you read through the first day's entries, you will notice immediately that each one is different from the rest, just as all the children are different. Your responses to each child's entries should reflect that uniqueness. Write back in your own style, but make sure you are addressing your students as individuals.

Early research on dialogue journals at Gallaudet found that, just as each student's journal is different, so are the responses of teachers. It is important not to expect any specific set of responses or outcomes from your students. Each journal goes its own way, just as good conversations do. Students begin their journals with a wide diversity of experience, personal styles, and needs. Those differences will show up as they write in their journals, offering valuable insights into students' concerns and personalities.



a PaTRY on SUNDay
FOR ChRiSMaS PaTRY.
this WhY.

6 You can't sleep at my home tonight, Dec 17 ! My parents from New Jersey will come to my house tonight Tomorrow night, we will go out to eat at a restaurant to celebrate our 5 th wedding anniversary we got married on Dec 17 1973 !

MY gFandm[illegible] Was
VERY SICK gFandm[illegible]
MuSt go [illegible] KonW
Why You WaS VERY SICK.

12-1 I am sorry to hear about your grandmother. what's wrong with her ?

You Where K[illegible]
N[illegible]
gR[illegible]

The journal is a place where students can share their innermost feelings.

Word about Privacy

A dialogue journal is a private exchange between one teacher and one student. That privacy may or may not be important to all the students using dialogue journals in a class. Some will treasure the privacy and consistently write in a confidential manner, knowing that what they say will never be seen by anyone but a trusted teacher. Others may be more open, not bothered even if others look over their shoulders. They may actually enjoy sharing bits of the narrative from their journals with friends.

It is important to make sure that all your students understand the element of privacy from the outset. They need to know that this privacy is to be respected for others as well as themselves, even when individual students may not see it as an important issue.

Teachers must be especially careful to keep private any personal or family information communicated through the dialogue journal. Students will come to see the journal as a place where they can share their innermost thoughts and feelings. But even when a student's writing seems to be routine and even trivial, the teacher should maintain privacy. It is not always obvious when a child considers the privacy factor important.

Interestingly enough, it has become clear that the need for privacy is not confined to older students. A great many elementary-aged children treasure the confidentiality of their journals and will go to great lengths to preserve it, because they are writing about very important concerns. The assurance of complete privacy can lead to deep sharing of self, a trust that should be central to any meaningful human communication.

Journals fit easily into the day's routine.

Chapter III

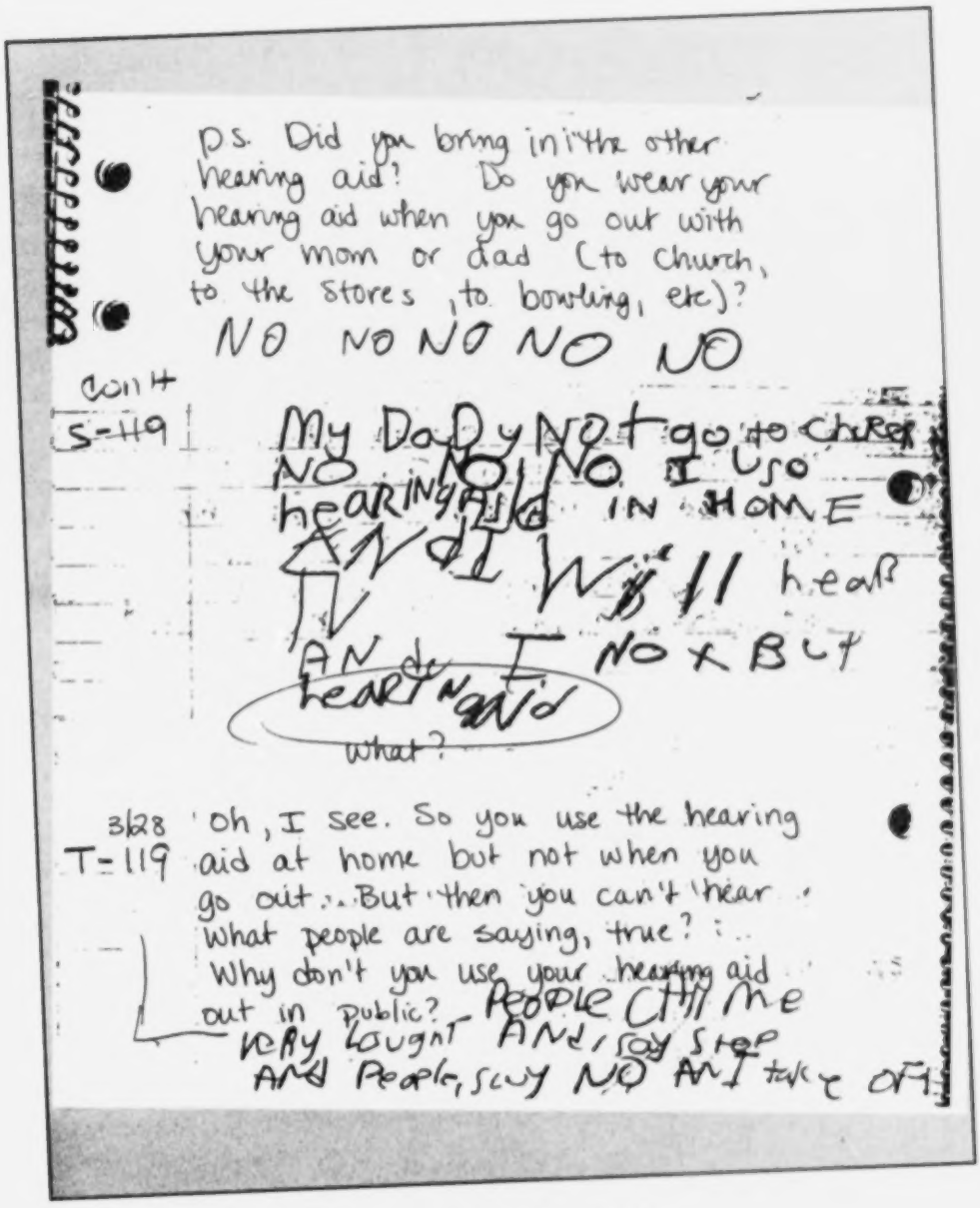
The Classroom Experience

Kendall Demonstration Elementary School and the Model Secondary School for the Deaf are the two pre-college schools on the Gallaudet College campus. Teachers in both of those schools have been using dialogue journals with their students for several semesters. Their experiences can provide an accurate picture of what happens in a classroom where students and teachers exchange dialogue journals on a regular basis. The accounts that follow are based on actual classroom observations conducted as part of the research on dialogue journal use.

Elementary—"Did you read my message?"

In a class of eight-year-olds, the children arrive in the morning, greet the teacher, hang up their coats, and put things away. Louise goes and gets her dialogue journal out of a special bin where all the journals are kept. She sits down at a round table and finds the last day's entries, reads rather quickly what the teacher has written, then starts writing her response.

Carol also takes her journal out of the special bin where they are kept. She opens the notebook and finds a reward sticker on the last page of writing. Pleased, she looks up at the teacher, who explains that the sticker is there "because that was the first time you wrote back about the topic we were discussing." Carol asks about a



P.S. Did you bring in the other hearing aid? Do you wear your hearing aid when you go out with your mom or dad (to church, to the stores, to bowling, etc)?
NO NO NO NO NO

Cont
S-119
My Dad y NOt go to Chur
NO NO NO I Uso
hearing Aid IN HOME
AND I Will hear
AN de I NO x BUt
heart Aid
what?

3/28
T-119
Oh, I see. So you use the hearing aid at home but not when you go out. But then you can't hear what people are saying, true? Why don't you use your hearing aid out in public? PEOPLE CAll me
VERY LOUGHT AND, SAY STOP
AND People, SLOW NO AN I take OFF

Robert and his teacher discuss wearing a hearing aid.

question the teacher had written in her journal. The teacher restates and explains the question to make sure Carol understands. Satisfied, Carol begins writing in her journal.

Josh finds his journal and opens it to the last page. He spends about 30 seconds intently reading that page. He writes a few words in response, then carries his journal over to the teacher to talk to her about today's message. He writes a little more, then puts his journal back in the bin, stopping for a moment to show Carol what he has written.

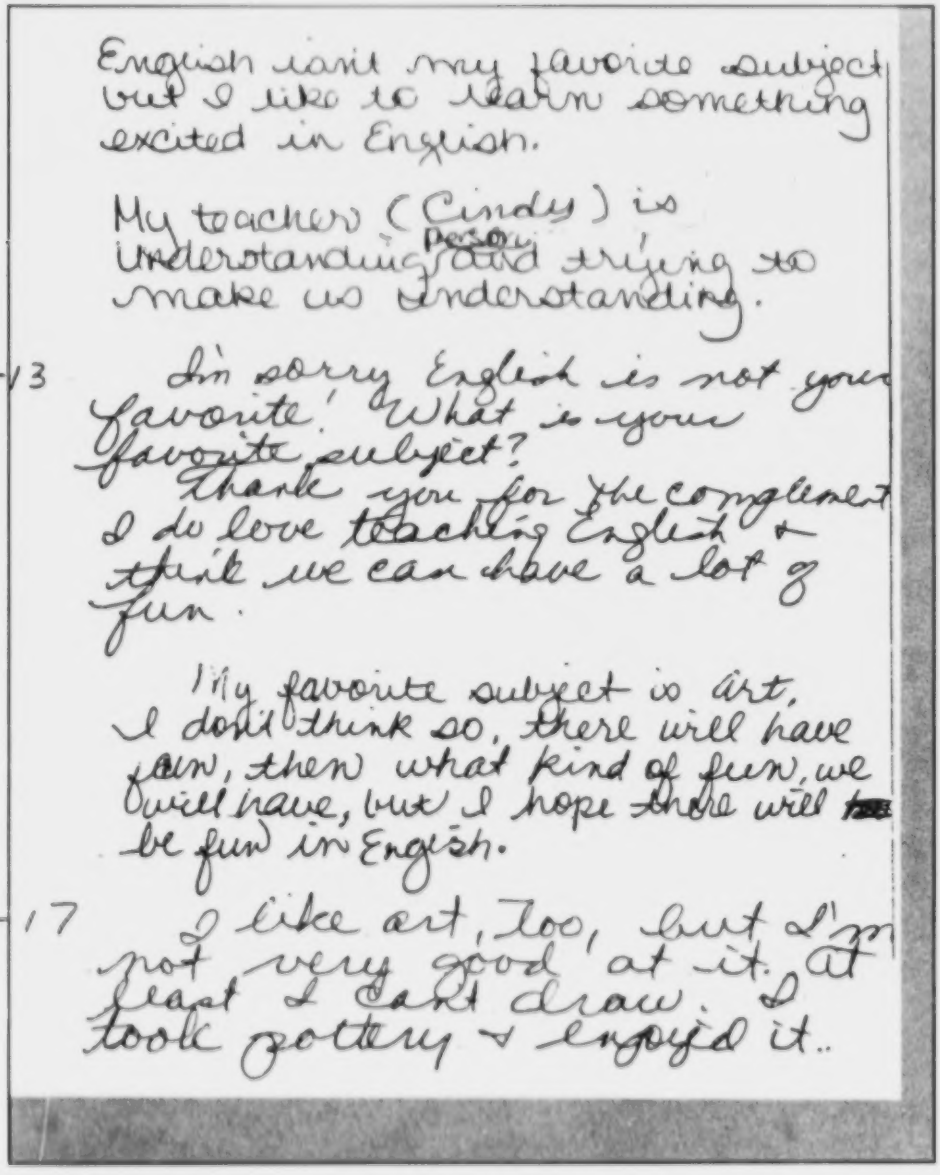
Robert gets his journal from the bin and sits down at the round table near Louise. He opens his notebook and glances quickly at the last page before beginning to write. The teacher gets his attention and asks, "Did you read my message? Read it again." They discuss briefly the teacher's last entry in his journal. "Do you use your hearing aid when you go out with your family to a restaurant?" Robert replies, "NO!" Then he goes back and writes an answer to the teacher's question.

Louise, who has finished her journal entry, begins working on a writing assignment. Carol and Josh discuss the stickers they found in their journals. The teacher joins the conversation and reinforces their pride in the stickers. Robert continues to write and draw in his journal.

The children spend varying amounts of time reading the teacher's messages and writing their responses. All the students finish the day's entries in their dialogue journals within about 20 minutes at the beginning of class. Finally, the teacher reminds them that it is time to put the journals away in the bin and start their regular classwork.

High School—"It's your turn to write now."

As her students leave the morning English class, Ms. Johnson reminds them to pick up their dialogue journals from the stack on a table near the door. Many of the students read their journals as they walk to the next class, then put them away to answer later in the day.



English isn't my favorite subject but I like to learn something excited in English.

My teachers (Cindy) is understanding good trying to make us understanding.

9-13 I'm sorry English is not your favorite! What is your favorite subject?
Thank you for the compliment I do love teaching English & think we can have a lot of fun.

My favorite subject is art, I don't think so, there will have pain, then what kind of fun, we will have, but I hope there will be fun in English.

9-17 I like art, too, but I'm not very good at it. At least I can't draw. I took pottery & enjoyed it..

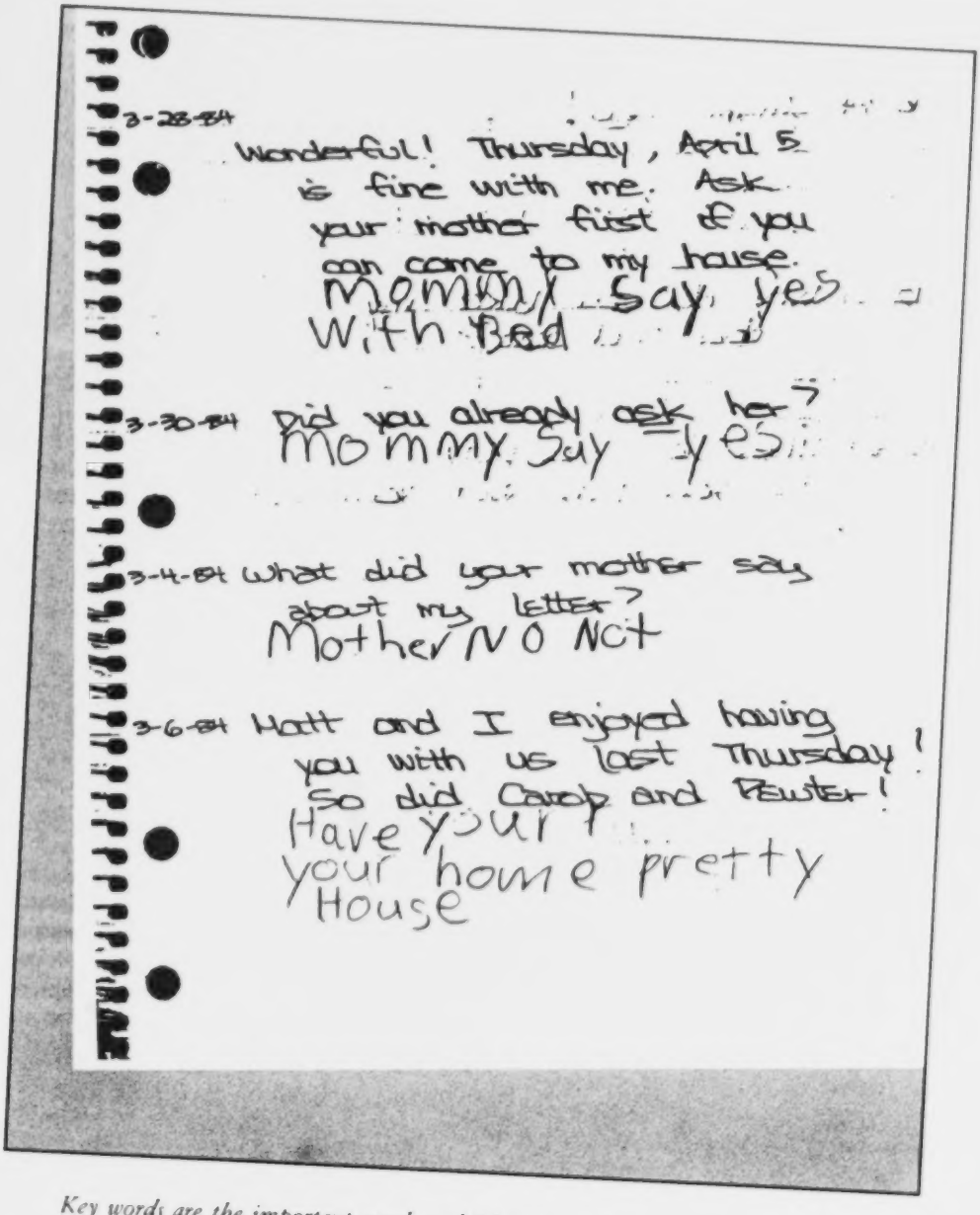
Older students write in their journals on their own time.

Mark takes his journal and dashes out, stowing it in his book bag. Linda reads hers immediately and stays on in the classroom for a few minutes after the bell to write her response. She hands the journal to Ms. Johnson before she leaves. "It's your turn to write now."

At various times during the day, students take out their journals to read what Ms. Johnson has written and to work on their own entries. Some write during lunch break, others during study hour, and some wait until they get back to the dorm after school. Jack, for example, writes in his journal after he has finished all his homework. This day has been particularly difficult for him, and he uses the journal to tell Ms. Johnson about it. Once he begins, he really gets interested in the writing, and finishes about 15 minutes later. Feeling better, he puts the journal with his books for the next day.

Margaret prefers to write in her journal at night. She has made it a regular part of her routine, leaving the journal beside her bed after school, and reading and writing in it just before she goes to sleep. Rhonda forgets about her journal until the next day, when it is due back to Ms. Johnson. She gets out her notebook and spends five minutes in homeroom writing her entry. Mark arrives in English class two minutes before the bell. He notices other students turning in their dialogue journals, pulls his out of his backpack, and writes quickly. Before the bell rings, he has completed the day's entry.

Ms. Johnson collects all nine of the journals, puts them aside, and goes on with the day's lesson. She has a planning period scheduled after this class, and finds that it is a good time to respond to the journals. She is always curious about what her students have to say, and feels she will respond best if she writes immediately after seeing them and reading their entries. She writes in all nine journals, then puts them back on the table where her students will look for them the next morning.



Key words are the important words a child wants to learn.

Words and Meanings

You may feel that your young students are ready for dialogue journals, but don't have a strong enough vocabulary base. The answer here is to go ahead and start, building vocabulary as it is needed. Dialogue journals fit beautifully into the natural development of language competence for young children. Used with a language experience approach, dialogue journals can help students acquire vocabulary that reflects their own interests and needs—much more meaningful than word lists in which students have no vested interest.

One language development method that is very compatible with dialogue journal writing is the Key Word Vocabulary approach developed by Sylvia Ashton-Warner, who worked with Maori children in New Zealand in the 1940s. Based on her research, she wrote that children have two visions: the inner and the outer. Of the two, the inner vision is brighter. According to Ashton-Warner, the key or first words are like captions for the child's own inner vision, and include the important words the child already wants to learn. She writes:

> First words must have an intense meaning.
> First words must already be part of the [child's] dynamic life.
> First words must be made of the stuff of the child, whatever and wherever the child is.
>
> (*Teacher*, 1963, page 32)

In the Key Word approach, rather than using illustrations to introduce reading and writing vocabulary, the teacher asks each child each day which one word he or she wants to learn. Those words are symbols of the child's inner being. Each word is written on a card and given to the child to keep, to read, and to use in writing, particularly in the dialogue journal. Some children may also want to draw pictures on the cards, to illustrate the words.

Words that have an intense meaning for the child will be learned quickly, and then used in writing. Words that are forgotten after a day or two may be taken away, because they are not important parts of the

child's life after all. Predictably, some of the key words that Sylvia Ashton-Warner found for her Maori students are the same words chosen by Kendall School students today: Mommy, Daddy, kiss, ghost, frightened, dog. The list of key words will be different for each child. Those words form an essential private vocabulary, covering the most important components of a child's life. In writing their dialogue journal entries, children can look at their cards for ideas, or ask the teacher for help with new words that may become the keys for that day.

While key word techniques are used mostly in beginning literacy, many deaf high school students may also lack the important words that can express their own experience, and might respond favorably to a more adult version of the key word approach.

Beyond the Routine

Most teachers find that dialogue journals quickly become a comfortable part of the daily routine. Special situations do occur, however, and teachers cope with them in various ways. It's a good idea to be prepared for unusual circumstances and know how to handle them.

For instance, what happens if you are absent from school? Your answer to that really depends on whether your students are able to handle reading and writing in the journals by themselves. If they are not, it may be better to establish a rule that journals are put away when you are not there. For one thing, this helps to maintain student privacy. If students can handle it, have them write to you on the first day of your absence, but not again until you return, since you won't be there to respond. When you get back, you will be able to reply to their earlier entries and start the regular cycle again.

What happens when a student is absent? Basically the same thing; write one entry, then wait for the student to return and respond. Especially if they have been out for several days, students are usually very happy to find their journals waiting for them, and to take up the familiar routine.

Even when a student teacher will be with the class for some time, it is best for the regular classroom teacher to continue writing in the dialogue journals. No matter how competent the student teacher is, children are likely to find it disruptive and confusing to have another adult take over the dialogue journals. It would be hard for any student teacher to start new journals and establish close relationships in a short period of time, and student privacy would be violated if both adults worked on the same journals.

The problem is even clearer in view of the basic concept of a dialogue journal as a private, written conversation between two people, not primarily a teaching tool. As much as possible, the dialogue journal should foster the relationship of two individuals as people, not as student and teacher. Given those principles, it is unwise to assume that the dialogue can be maintained even when a substitution is made for one of the the partners.

One good option is to let the student teacher set up separate journals with students who volunteer to participate, while the teacher maintains regular dialogue journals with all the students. Another option, if the student teacher will be available for a substantial period of time, might be to divide the class into two groups, each group corresponding with one of the adults.

Teachers who work with very young children may find some who have trouble keeping their journals under control. Some children may open the journals and write on any blank page, regardless of sequence. You might try clipping together the pages that have not yet been written on, so students can find the right place. Don't clip pages that have already been filled, because students like to go back and read their journals, look up information, and check spelling or use of idioms. If clipping the pages seems a bit extreme for your students, one really good solution is for the teacher to date each of her entries very clearly. You may want to ask students to date their entries too, but it's not necessary, especially with younger children. Aside from marking the place, this technique can teach dates without much effort from teacher or students.

I real like Hawaii and California and mexico allfime onsummer my Dad's family drive to South mexico, because I real Love island at Hawaii Oahu.

When did you go to Hawaii? What did you do there?

I have never been to Hawaii, California, or Mexico. I would like to visit these places someday. Maybe next summer I went to Hawaii. I hope you will go there.

You have never been to Hawaii before? I'd like to go there, but I want to go to California first.

I said MAybe I will go to Hawaii See my uncle, Aug. my uncle move to South California. I will go to California next years. What your favorite on TV and Star movies? and why you said that write why?

Students often are amazed at the growth of their writing skills.

Closing Out the Year

Children often go through more than one notebook during a school year or semester. It is a good idea for the teacher to keep all the journals until the end of the school year, then hand them out all at once for students to take home. During the year, students need the assurance that their journals are truly private, and will not be read by parents or others without permission. By the end of the year, however, most problems and crises are safely over, and younger children are usually proud to show their parents how much they wrote.

Older students usually want to keep their journals private permanently, but that is up to the individual.

Before returning the journals, teachers should plan class time for students to read them through quickly, then discuss the experience. Elementary age children, in particular, want and need to have their experience recognized and validated by their peers. Students often are amazed at the visible growth of their writing skills. An overall review of the year's journal entries provides solid evidence of accomplishment, much more clearly than test scores do.

Teachers may wish to make copies of especially interesting journals. Since teachers have half ownership in their students' journals, they have every right to keep copies. Both students and their parents must give permission, however, if journal copies are to be used in workshops or publicly shared in any other way. Appendix A outlines the specific consent procedures used at Gallaudet and elsewhere.

A Teacher Support Group

It is often helpful for teachers using dialogue journals to set up a support group within the school. Teachers can compare notes on their successes and frustrations and offer each other general help and advice. But they should never forget that the journals themselves are personal and private. Shared experience is helpful, as long as the identities of individual children and specific incidents remain confidential.

Among the experiences teachers will come to share is the dawning realization of how well the process works—for them and for their students. The trouble involved is minimal, the frustrations pass, and the benefits are incalculable. Dialog journals are an effective, easy, and natural way to communicate with students while helping them build language skills they can rely on for the rest of their lives.

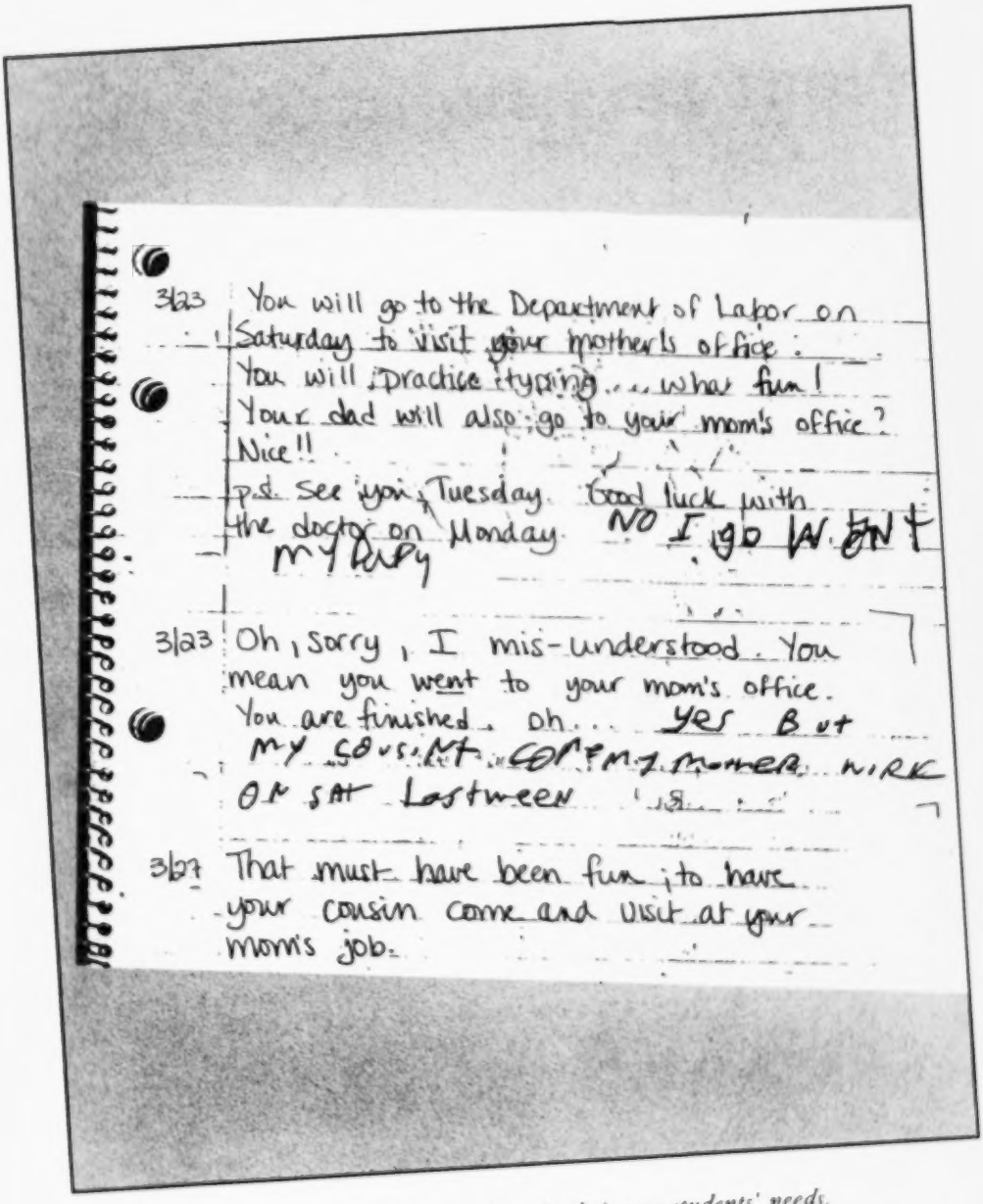
At this point, you probably have enough information to get your students started on their dialogue journals. You will find they are really a very simple, direct form of communication, one that almost every student can enjoy being part of. After you have worked with dialogue journals for a month or more, you probably will have additional questions. Chapter IV, What Do I Do If..? provides answers to common questions that arise.

Chapter IV

What Do I Do If...?

What Do I Do If ...

1. My classroom is not organized like the ones you describe?
2. A student only gives one-word answers?
3. We don't understand each other?
4. Students just draw pictures in their dialogue journals?
5. A student isn't motivated to write much?
6. A student has nothing to say, or can't seem to find a topic?
7. A student writes about the same topic every day?
8. My students don't respond to my questions?
9. My students demand grades?
10. My students use poor grammar?



3/23 You will go to the Department of Labor on Saturday to visit your mother's office. You will practice typing... what fun! Your dad will also go to your mom's office? Nice!!
p.s. See you Tuesday. Good luck with the doctor on Monday. NO I GO WENT MY BABY

3/23 Oh, sorry, I mis-understood. You mean you went to your mom's office. You are finished. oh... YES But MY COUSIN CAME TO MY MOMER WORK OR SAT LastWEEN

3/27 That must have been fun to have your cousin come and visit at your mom's job.

Teachers can adapt dialogue journals to fit their own students' needs.

11. My students write about problems I don't feel qualified to handle?

12. After a month of writing, my dialogues are not like the ones in this book?

13. I'm not really comfortable with dialogue journals?

1. What do I do if my classroom is not organized like the ones you describe?

Individual teachers learn to adapt the dialogue journals to fit their own students' needs and the logistics of individual classrooms. Here are several different scenarios, based on the way teachers at different age levels, teaching different kinds of students, have adapted dialogue journals. One of these may help you figure out how dialogue journals will work best for your situation.

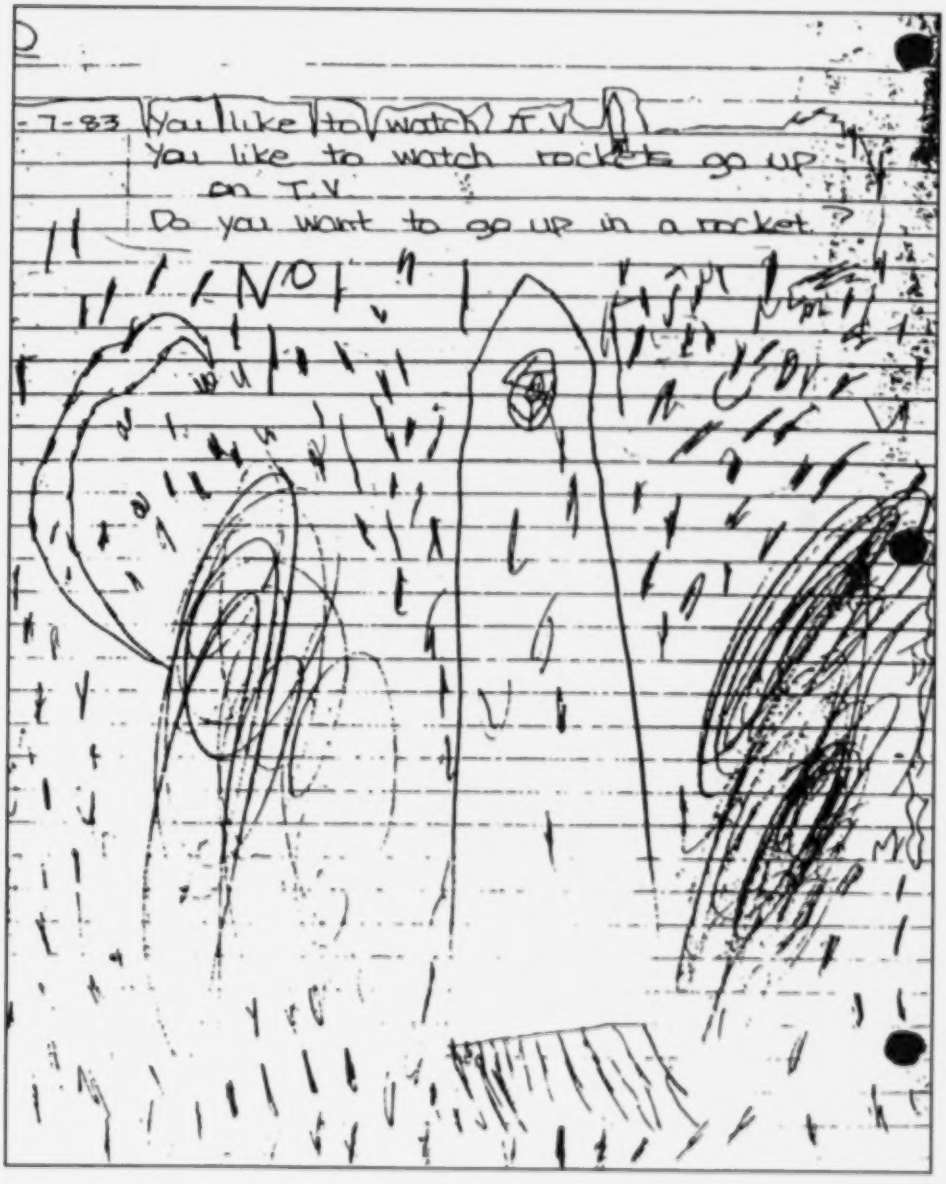
At the Primary Level—Part of the Day

Classroom A: Five eight-year-olds and one teacher
Functioning level high—above average intelligence and strong language background.

The students come to class in the morning, check their hearing aids, and turn in their homework. Then they take their dialogue journals from the bucket where they are kept, sit wherever they like in the room, and write the day's messages to their teacher. They write in the journals every day, most students spending about 15 minutes on their entries.

As students finish, they put the journals back in the bucket and work independently on stories for their Creative Writing folders. The teacher uses the time to correct homework, write to parents, and respond to student questions. The teacher finds dialogue journals a good way to prepare her students for creative writing.

Classroom B: Seven six-year-olds, the teacher, and one aide.
Functioning level low—average intelligence without strong language background.



Many six-year-olds are still at the drawing stage.

Students spend an average of 20 minutes every day on their dialogue journals. As the children come into the room in the morning, the teacher checks their hearing aids. They get their dialogue journals from the bookshelf, sit at their desks, and read the teacher's most recent entries. Some students are still at the drawing stage.

The teacher circulates around the room, offering individual help to students who do not understand her messages, or who are having trouble writing their own entries. She spends one or two minutes per child for each request. As the children finish, they go to the reading corner for independent reading. When all the students have finished their journals, group work begins.

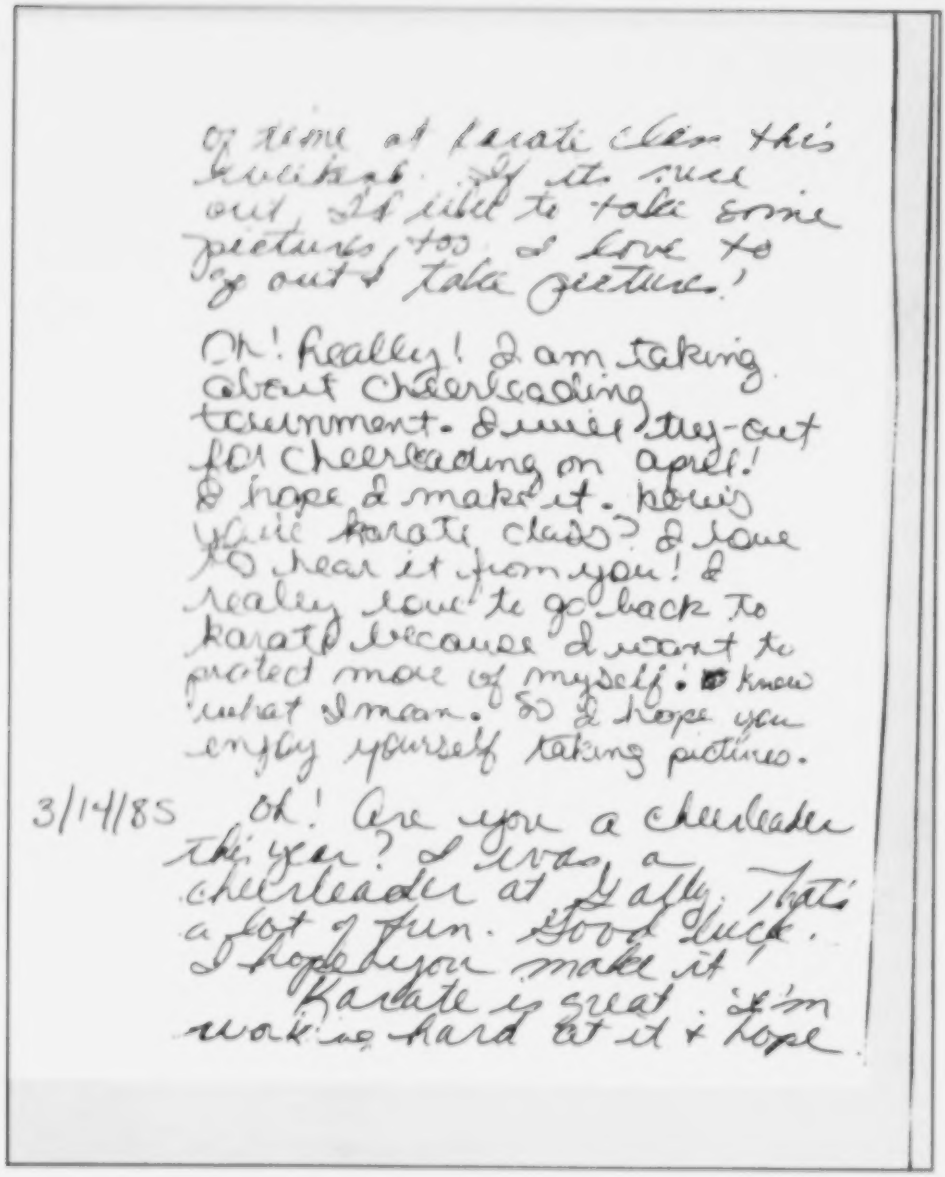
Classroom C: Six 11-year-olds, one teacher and one aide.
Functioning level average.

These students do not have an established time to write in their dialogue journals. They are expected to enter at least one message every day, and usually write several times, spending a total of about 10 minutes a day. Students find their journals on their desks every morning and keep them for the rest of the day.

Most students write in their journals during the first 15 minutes of each morning (socialization time), during the few minutes between classes, before or after lunch, and the last 15 minutes of the day. On special occasions, students may request permission to write in their journals during class. At the end of the day, students leave the journals on their desks so the teacher can collect, read, and respond to them.

High School Scenarios—Taking Time

Classroom D: Eight 15 and 16-year-olds, one teacher and one aide.
Functioning level low—below average intelligence and weak language skills.



of time at karate class this evening. If it's not out, I'd like to take some pictures, too. I love to go out & take pictures!

Oh! Really! I am taking about Cheerleading tournament. I must try-out for Cheerleading on April! I hope I make it. How's your karate class? I love to hear it from you! I really love to go back to karate because I want to protect more of myself. You know what I mean. So I hope you enjoy yourself taking pictures.

3/14/85 Oh! Are you a cheerleader this year? I was a cheerleader at Y'all. That's a lot of fun. Good Luck. I hope you make it.

Karate is great. I'm working hard at it & hope

High school students are responsible for picking up their own journals.

The teacher sets aside 10 minutes at the beginning of each day for students to work with their dialogue journals; she and an aide are available to help as needed. As students finish reading and writing in their journals, they place them in a box on the teacher's desk. The journals stay in the classroom.

Classroom E: Ten 18-year-olds plus teacher. Functioning level average.

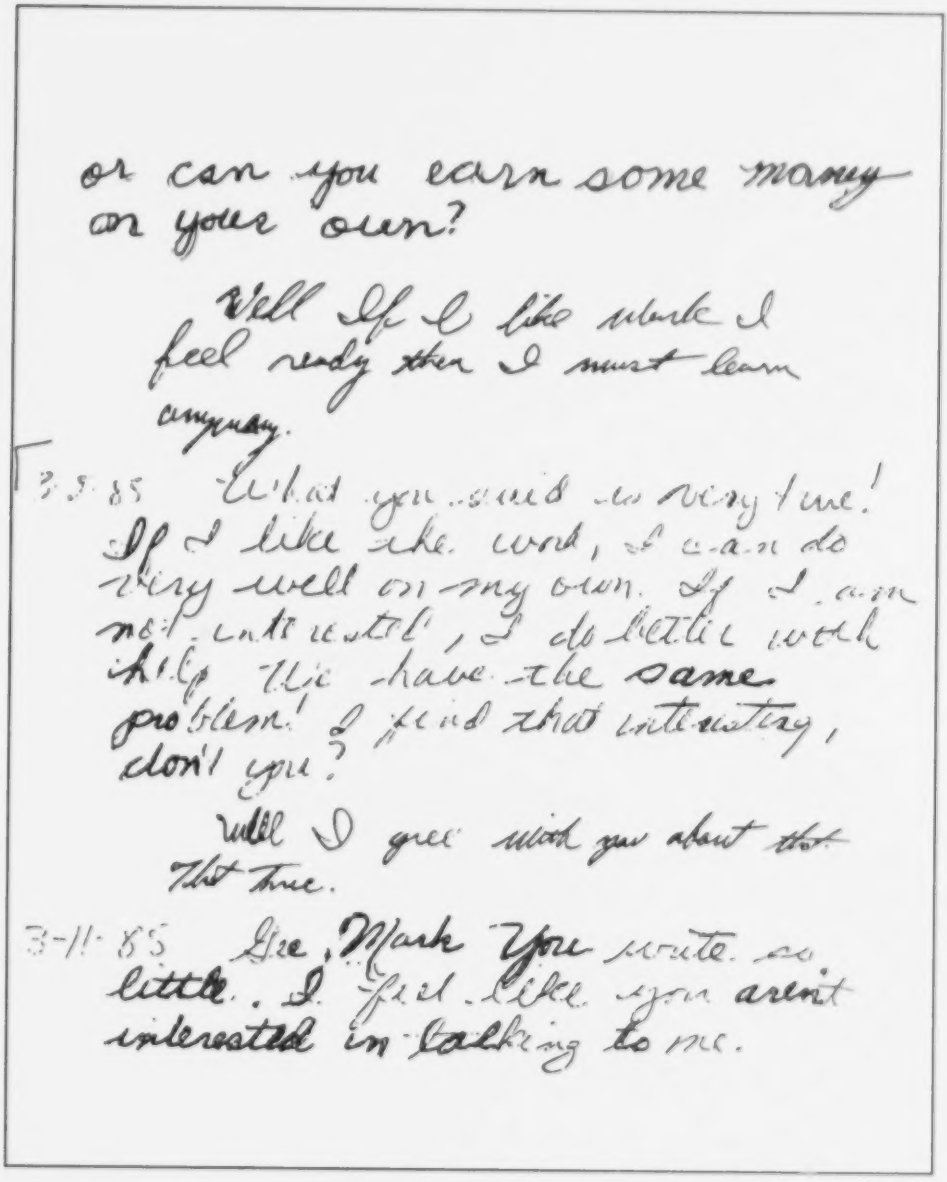
These students spend only one class period per day with this teacher. Students write in their dialogue journals every day as a regular homework assignment, but not during class time. They can use breaks, lunch or study periods, or complete their entries at home or in the dorm.

Every morning they bring in their journals and leave them in a box at the front of the room. The teacher responds to each student's entry and replaces the journals in the box by the end of the day. Students are responsible for coming back to the classroom and picking up their journals before leaving school.

Classroom F: 20 16-year-olds and two teachers. Functioning level high—above average intelligence and a strong language base.

Each of the two teachers exchanges dialogue journals with 10 of the students in the class. They add new journal messages three times every week, with students and teachers writing on alternate days.

On Monday morning, the students bring in their journals and give them to the appropriate teacher. The teachers write back by Tuesday morning. Then the students pick up the journals on Tuesday and bring them back on Wednesday morning with new entries. Again the teachers respond, having the journals ready for students to pick up on Thursday. On Friday, the students bring the books in the morning and pick them up again before leaving in the afternoon.



or can you earn some money on your own?

Well If I like work I feel ready then I must learn company.

3-3-85 What you said is very true! If I like the work, I can do very well on my own. If I am not interest, I do little work help. We have the same problem! I find that interesting, don't you?

Well I agree with you about that. That true.

3-11-85 Gee, Mark You wrote so little. I feel like you aren't interested in talking to me.

Some students write brief answers to complete the entry without effort.

2. What do I do when a student only gives one-word answers?

There may be several reasons for such brief answers, with several possible solutions. First, is the child responding accurately to your questions? When you write, "Was your mother at the store with you?" a one-word yes-or-no answer is technically correct. It may be frustrating to you, however, because you may not have not received all of the information you wanted.

In this kind of situation, try to ask open-ended questions that require more than a one-word answer: "What was your mother doing?" or "Why didn't your mother pay for the soda?" You might also try using softened directives rather than questions. "I'm curious about where your mother was; fill me in." or "It's strange that your mother didn't pay for the soda. Tell me why you think that happened." Leave the student no choice but to answer more fully.

Students often give one-word replies when they do not fully understand what the teacher has written. They may also feel incapable of living up to the teacher's expectations because of limited vocabulary or writing ability. In those kinds of situations, make sure students understand your entry, and guide them toward the kind of response you expect. Without encouraging students to depend on you, try to be available to help them over the rough spots.

Some students just get lazy, and write brief responses to complete the entry without effort. If you know that a student is capable of writing a better entry, try responding in kind. A one-word comment or the use of "Oh," or "hmmm" is often enough to let students know that their responses are not adequate or interesting. You might try simply drawing a line next to the entry date to imply, "I guess the time I spend writing to you is not appreciated. I'm not going to waste any more of my time." Most students, even six and seven-year-olds, quickly get the picture and begin writing more informative entries.

Another suggestion, when other techniques have failed, is to ask the child, either in the journal or in private conversation, why the answers are so short. Often there is a not-so-obvious but oh-so-simple explanation.

3. What if the child and I do not understand each other?

Just as in spoken conversation, sometimes one party to a dialogue journal does not understand what the other is trying to say. Strategies that are helpful in clarifying everyday conversation can also be used in dialogue journals.

Teachers can simply ask for more information, using open-ended or directed questions. Ask the student to explain further. Use arrows, underlining, or asterisks to emphasize the parts you do not understand.

Be alert to signals that a student does not understand something you have written. When the student does not respond to your messages, does not answer questions, or consistently writes about different subjects, the problem may be lack of understanding. Rewrite entries that you think may not have been understood. Ask the student if there is a problem with your messages. Set up a conference to make sure you both understand what is happening. For very young children, it is often helpful to ask students to read your messages aloud (privately, of course).

Don't be discouraged if it takes a long time to clarify things in the journals. It may take four or five days or a week for you and a student to reach understanding on a seemingly minor point. Once the communication becomes clear, however, the student will have learned a valuable lesson and gained experience in the techniques of reaching understanding through writing.

4. What if students just draw pictures in their dialogue journals?

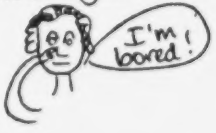
There are several reasons why students choose to draw rather than write in their journals. Some may not have enough confidence in their writing, or may not have

Very much???

5/8 That's no secret to me, Margie ☺ I Know you love riddles.
I only like riddles when I can learn the answer right away; otherwise they bore me.

Ha-ha Hi I didn't Know bore Means tell me tomorrow OK

5/9 Sure you know "bore"
How do you sign it? Put your index finger on the side of your nose and twist your hand.



Got it? In English it means to lose interest, to think to yourself "I don't care about this"

Helpful strategies for everyday conversation can also be used with dialogue journals.

adequate vocabulary to express themselves easily. It is probably a good idea to let the child continue drawing for a while—at least it is a form of expression and communication. Then gradually encourage the child to add writing to the drawings.

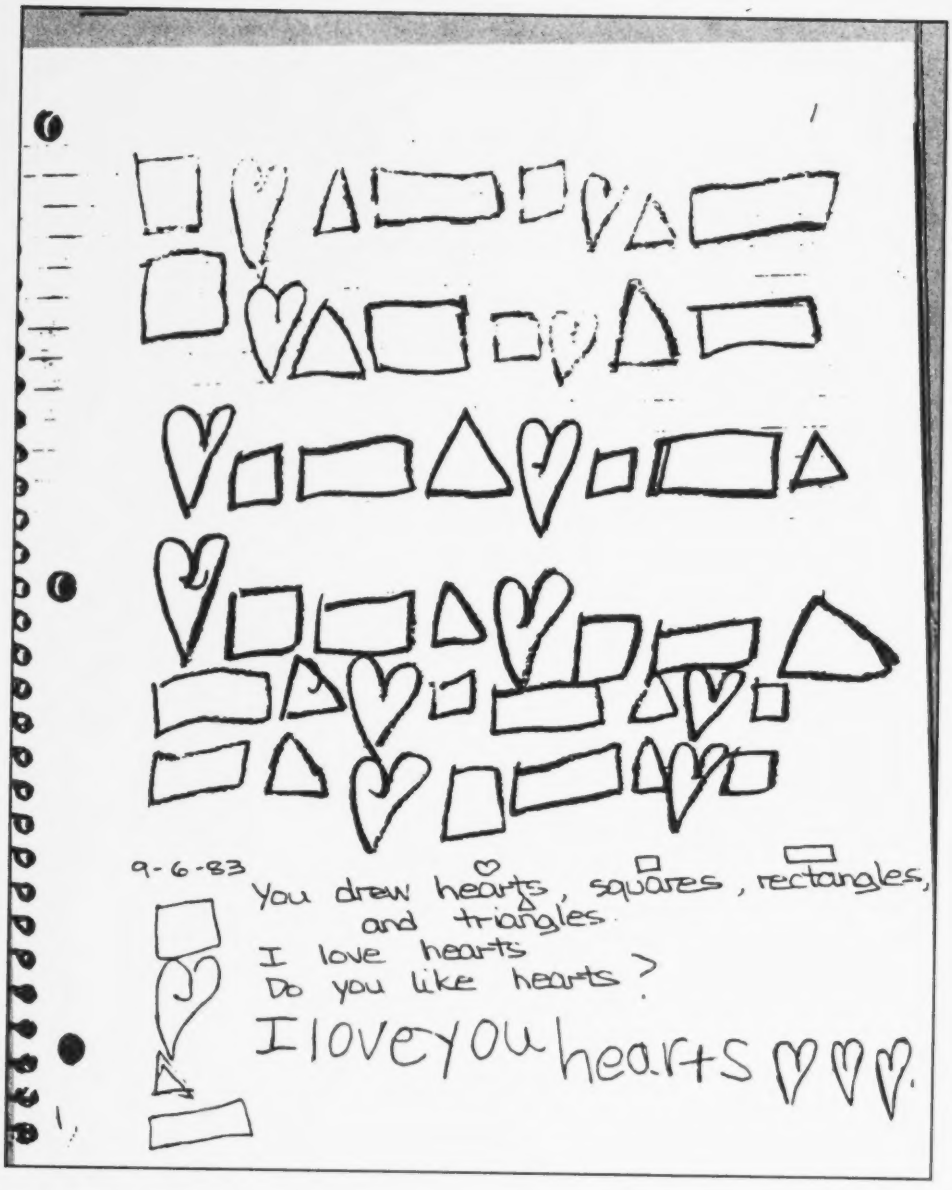
- Ask the child to label the drawings and to tell you something about them.
- Write back about the drawings; ask questions that require verbal answers.
- Later on, compromise by suggesting that drawings be limited to only half the page.
- Suggest that now the child has graduated from drawing pictures, and is big enough to write instead of drawing.

Choose notebooks to be used for dialogue journals that will encourage writing rather than drawing. The pages should not be too large, and should be lined for writing. Ask children to use pencils or ball-point pens rather than markers. Most children become so interested in the content of their journals that they will eventually move into writing.

5. How can I encourage my students to write more?

It is important to remember that everyone is subject to outside influences and changing feelings. You may think a student has a motivation problem, but the student just may not be in the mood to write on the day in question. Give students plenty of time to respond. Continue writing as though nothing had changed—within a few days most students probably will decide that their journals are interesting after all.

Some students may not feel like writing at the time of day that is currently scheduled. Many people find it hard to be communicative and spontaneous at specific times. Give students a choice of times during the day to write in their journals, or drop the schedule and let them write whenever they are ready.



Write back about drawings: ask questions that require verbal answers.

Younger children can often be motivated by small prizes for good writing, such as stickers pasted on their pages.

It is important for your entries to be about the same length as those written by your students. You do not want them to feel intimidated by the thought of responding to lengthy messages.

Again, use directives rather than questions. "Please tell me more about..." is more open-ended than "What did you do then?" When you request information about stujects students are interested in, you demonstrate that you value them as individuals and are concerned about what they think.

If young students stop communicating in writing, you might suggest that they draw pictures for a while. Chances are their drawings will suggest interesting topics for discussion, and your responses can help them find words for what they want to say.

If none of the above suggestions seems to work, try giving the student a short break from journal writing. The one student without an active dialogue journal will almost certainly begin to feel left out of the classroom communication.

Finally, remind the student that you are both involved in the journal communication. Say something like, "I really miss hearing from you." Another tactic is simply not to allow students to drop out. "I haven't seen anything in your journal for a long time. You seem to be having trouble scheduling time to write, and it is very important. I want you to stay in for recess today so you can make time to write in your journal."

6. What if my students seem to have nothing to say? How can I help them find interesting topics to write about?

This problem may appear because students still feel restricted in their choice of topics, even though you were careful to explain that they can write about anything they like. Other students may not be sure that

you will be interested in whatever they want to discuss. One wise teacher asks older students who seem to be having trouble writing anything, "What do **you** think dialogue journals should be about?" The question seems to make students aware of their own responsibility for keeping the dialogue interesting for both themselves and you.

Younger children sometimes seem to feel that the teacher already knows everything, and that therefore they have nothing to tell her. Successful communication is a good motivator. When children are able to write about a subject they know a lot about, to an audience that isn't familiar with the subject, they derive a pleasant sense of power. You might ask about a subject in which you know the student is expert.

Children like to make comparisons and learn how they are similar to and different from others. Young children also find their teachers very interesting. They seem to love finding out about the teacher's life away from school. Everyone wants to be considered important. Ask your students' opinions about classroom events.

Encourage them to let you know what they like and don't like. Older students can be asked for suggestions on improving classroom routines. One 11-year-old, for instance, solved a problem with rearranging the classroom! The teacher had asked for suggestions because she was genuinely stumped herself.

Following is a list of hot topics, subjects that have been reliable in rousing the interest of primary, intermediate, and most secondary age students. These should not be used as class assignments, but as suggestions for times when your students seem to have nothing interesting to discuss in their dialogue journals. You might look for signs of interest in one or more of these topics, or use them as the basis for questions when a student has a dry spell.

Hot Topics for Dialogues

- My pets and your pets (good for several weeks), death of pets
- Rockets, planes, flying, hot air balloons
- Accidents
- Grandparents
- Friends, problems with friendships
- Birthdays and holidays (Halloween and Christmas or Chanukah are particularly interesting.)
- Comparison of student's and teacher's backgrounds (How many brothers or sisters, where did you live, what did you like to do?)
- Likes, dislikes, fears, dreams
- New projects or suggestions for things to do in school
- Vacation plans
- Teacher's home life, children, spouse
- Story swapping (funny stories, scary stories, etc.)
- Things that happen on the school bus
- Current rock stars and other popular figures
- Dancing
- Motorcycles, cars
- Sports
- Dating and other social events
- Future plans

7. What if a student writes about the same topic every day?

Ongoing topics about which both participants have a lot to say can be part of the joy of dialogue journal writing. But occasionally a student will go on writing the same sentences about one topic for weeks, never starting on anything new. It becomes very difficult for the teacher to respond in a interesting manner.

Some students who do this may lack the skill to introduce new topics, especially if their communication background is limited. You may need to talk to them directly, to help them think about and introduce new topics. Soon you should be able to introduce new topics through the journal itself.

Other students are not confident enough to write about anything but topics that have already been proven safe. With younger students, you may want to wait and let them find their own way into new and more interesting

subjects. With older students, you may want to explore, in the journal or in conversation, why their interests are so limited.

Students often have very narrow ideas of what good writing should be like, and thus continue to write on the same topic to avoid making mistakes. These students need to be encouraged to break out of the mold and start using the dialogue journal to think, explore new ideas, and take risks.

You might also look at your own entries. They should be a source of interesting ideas and new topics. Are you introducing new thoughts about the topics they bring up, to stimulate further discussion? Does implied criticism of the student's ideas appear in some of your entries?

Some teachers become very adept at inserting hooks into their own writing, to encourage students to think creatively and ask questions. Look carefully at whether your writing introduces new topics. You can extend the subjects your students introduce by offering new information, as in the following examples.

Teacher: *I think your weekend with Jannie sounded really neat. You have told me a lot about it all week. This weekend my husband and I are going to visit friends who have promised to take us up in a hot air balloon!*

T: *It's funny, you have two cats and I don't have any. I guess our 100-pound wolfhound would probably not like having a kitten around.*

In any case, it is all right to suggest that you are really tired of a topic that continues for a while without going anywhere, and to start negotiating new subjects for discussion in the journal.

8

9-13 Margie - You forgot to answer my questions! Please re-read my 9-12 entry and answer my questions. I really want to know the answers.

-- Thanks ☺

Look Picture

Page seven

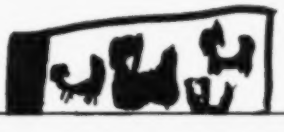
now you Look Page 6-7

Right now I withdraw your other Picure ok? do you know what I said?

yes ☐

or

no ☒



Follow up on questions that are important.

8. What if my students don't respond to my questions?

Neither students nor teachers involved in dialogue journals are required to respond to every question or topic that is brought up. As in face to face conversation, either participant may opt to ignore a journal entry and change the subject. At the very least, this is a way to let the other participant know the subject is not of interest. Teachers as well as students should try to follow up on important questions. They should feel free, however, to avoid getting caught up in subjects that are distasteful or uninteresting in a conscientious attempt to respond to everything the student writes.

Some students, however, may consistently neglect to answer questions or to continue exploring topics they have introduced. Most of the time, it is enough for the teacher to be patient and continue asking questions and referring back to topics that have been ignored. Be sure to follow up on questions that have real importance to you, but not necessarily on everything you write. Students usually catch on within a short time.

Some students simply do not understand the principles of written dialogue. They may tend to see the journal as a collection of essays or a daily log, and to completely ignore the writing of the other participant. Such students usually do not think of written English as a means of two-way communication. The journal becomes a daily task required by the teacher, to be approached as they approach other writing assignments.

A relatively straightforward procedure can help the teacher make the student understand the meaning of a dialogue journal. First, call attention in the journal to the fact that the student is not responding to statements or questions. Often, this reminder is enough. If not, the teacher should continue to register the same complaint in a variety of ways.

Occasionally, the teacher might run into students who still do not get the message. One strategy is to talk to the student directly, asking for more direct responses and if necessary, showing the student exactly what you

expect. You may find it helpful to write a few exchanges during the conversation, to make sure the student understands the problem and is on the right track.

Arrows, stars, and underlining can also be effective in directing the student's attention. One high school teacher had been exchanging a dialogue journal with a student for nearly three months, but the student continued to ignore the teacher's comments, questions, and complaints. Finally, the use of arrows and complaints together proved to be a winning combination.

Student: *What should you do in Thanksgiving?*

Teacher: *We'll cook a big dinner. What will you do?*

S: *On Dec. 3 & 4 my wrestling team and I will play vs. South Carolina. My family will go there and see me play. Is it nice?*

T: *That's very nice. I wonder if you read what I write. You don't answer my questions!*

S: *Today is my first wrestling game vs. PSD and also on Friday and Sat. I will go to S.C. for a tournament. Is it fun?*

T: *Yes wrestling is fun! How long have you been wrestling?*

S: *My team in fifth place in S.C. tournament. And I won 4th place in 98 weight class. It will be long to Feb. 18-19. It will be our last games.*

T: *Answer my question! We are supposed to be talking to each other. When you don't answer my questions, it's like you aren't listening to me.*

S: *I am sorry! I always convince my answers! Ha! How is my test last Friday? Are my grades of English class improving?*

T: *Fine! Now start answering my question. Yes, your grades are better. Do you feel you are learning more?*

Question

S: *Yes, I am learning about English and I was forced myself to convince English course. If I fail this course and it will postpone that I will graduate on 1987. But I don't want it happen to me. Am I right?*

It took three months, but this teacher finally found a strategy that got the concept of a written conversation through to the student. All the writing that occurred after this point was a true dialogue between student and teacher. Later the student was asked how he felt about dialogue journal writing. He said that at the beginning of the year he didn't understand what he was supposed to do. He thought he just had to write something for the teacher and turn it in. Once he understood that he was supposed to talk with the teacher instead of write for her, he enjoyed writing in his dialogue journal.

9. What if my students want to be graded on their dialogue journals?

The idea of grading the dialogue journals may contradict their original purpose, but this question is often asked by high school teachers. High school students are accustomed to working for grades, and teachers occasionally have trouble getting them to write without that incentive. Most students get used to the idea and enjoy the exchange of ideas with their teachers. It is a good idea to start without grades, to see whether the journals themselves will provide motivation enough.

For high school students who insist on some kind of grade, teachers may be able to limit it to zeros for students who do not turn in their journals on schedule. This system works well for students who take their journals home or to the dorm every night and tend to forget them. It also is effective for reminding students to write during class time, if that is the schedule your class has adopted. The prospect of getting zeros, which will lower their cumulative averages, keeps many students on their toes.

Other students may want more comprehensive grades. For them, the teacher might keep a tally of dialogue journal use. The ratio of actual entries to entries

1/6 "Relatives" means people in the same family group.
You and Jenny are cousins so you are relatives. Does that clear it up? I hope so!

Oh I See today will have Snow 2 to 4 thanks For Information.

1/90 Yes, I hope we will get from 2-4 inches of snow. You're welcome!

Va had 4 inches!... how ABOUT YOURS? tell ME!!!

how Many? inch thanks

1/11 Vienna had 4 inches!?! Brother! that's a lot. I live in Virgina, too, but my town (Arlington) only got about 1 inch. Poor me ... Lucky you. You are funny! One inch is tiny

Like this → that inch

Students build their command of English through interaction with the teacher.

requested would yield a figure that could be translated into a letter grade, depending on your school's marking system. If, for instance, students were asked to write ten times in a two-week period, a student who only turned in seven entries would receive a 70 percent, with a corresponding letter grade.

Above all, it is important never to grade the **quality** of student writing in the journal. A dialogue journal is supposed to be an exchange of views between equals. Criticism and grades can undermine that sense of equality.

10. What if my students' writing is grammatically incorrect?

The purpose of dialogue journals is to encourage students to use written English to communicate with other people. As long as some interaction is taking place, the students have an opportunity to learn and grow in their command of the language. Correcting student errors in the dialogue journal tends to focus attention on what is wrong, rather than on the students'ability to express themselves in writing.

In order to keep the dialogue journal experience rewarding for students, teachers should ignore mistakes in grammar. You will have plenty of other opportunities to provide corrective feedback. Instead, focus on what students are trying to say, and respond appropriately. Your responses give you a chance to accomplish two things:

- Let students know you understand and value what they are saying, making them feel good about the process and about writing as a way to communicate.

- Model correct written English usage, exposing students to new structures and new vocabulary. Rewording a student's entry in good English can indicate that you understand the message, while demonstrating correct use of the language.

Suppose a student's writing is so badly spelled and so grammatically incorrect that you cannot understand it?

Use the same repair tactics you would use in a spoken or signed conversation. Let the student know that you are having trouble understanding the message. Ask questions to verify what you think the child is trying to say. Your questions and suggestions can model correct spelling or grammar and improve communication.

11. What if my students write about problems I don't feel qualified to respond to or handle?

This happens rarely, but it does happen. As you progress further into the dialogue journals, developing closer relationships with your students, a special kind of respect and trust often emerges. Students will often share very confidential information with you. Usually this is not a problem, and the student's privacy should be protected. But occasionally students will bring up serious matters that teachers feel they cannot address themselves and should not try to keep confidential.

If the information is serious enough to indicate that the student needs professional help, it is usually sufficient to suggest, either in person or in the journal, that the student seek counseling. If the problem persists, you might work with the student to set up an appointment with a counselor.

When the information must be shared with another party, either because of a dangerous situation or a violation of law, your first obligation is to communicate directly with your student. Tell the student that you feel the information must be shared, why you feel that is necessary, and who must be told. Make it very clear that this is an extreme situation, and that you will try to protect the student's privacy as much as possible.

If it is hard for you to seek help for a student's problem, you might remember that children often turn to people they trust in the hope that something will be done. Often, a shared confidence is a call for help, and it may be entirely appropriate for you to respond by suggesting or seeking professional assistance.

None of this implies that you should feel free to report on every problem your students share with you. Your

first move is always to suggest ways the students might solve their problems, incuding other people they might talk to. Only under extreme conditions should the rule of complete privacy be broken, and then only after letting the student know that this will happen.

12. What if, after a month of exchanging dialogue journals with my students, our journals are not like the examples in this book?

On any given day, students' entries may be very dull and ordinary. Of course, the most interesting examples from a year-long journal project were chosen to illustrate this book. There is no sure way of knowing when a rather ordinary conversation with a student will catch fire. It is important to continue exchanging casual thoughts and encouragement, keeping the channels of communication open.

The daily interactions that take place in a dialogue journal can be thought of as single sentences in a long conversation. Every day, teachers engage in several different conversations through their students' journals. It is often difficult to see how each dialogue is progressing on a daily basis, and how it might lead to an important understanding or a communication breakthrough.

13. What if I'm not really comfortable with these dialogues? How long does it take?

No one teaching technique works all the time for every child; dialogue journals don't work at all for some students, no matter how successful they are for most.

It takes most teachers between six months and a year to enjoy and feel confident about juggling several different written conversations every day. Many teachers experience a trying-out period of two months or longer, during which they may be quite anxious about doing it right. Most find it very difficult to be sure they are responding appropriately to students' entries. During this time, even teachers may find they are sometimes reluctant to continue writing.

It also takes practice for some teachers to drop the habit of asking questions all the time, and to feel free enough to respond honestly and spontaneously. Writing to students as equals may require a basic change in attitude. You need to be willing to give the process adequate time—several months, if possible—before you decide whether this kind of conversational partnership is worthwhile for you and your students.

A Final Note About Communication

Among every 10 or 15 students, there is likely to be one who doesn't respond to this kind of conversational partnership with a teacher, and who will never really become engaged or introduce topics to discuss. Probably the best you can do for this kind of reluctant student is to keep the door open. Don't waste time worrying that the lack of communication is your fault; concentrate on the successful dialogues.

Chapter V

How Can Dialogue Journals Benefit My Students?

Messages from the Authors

I love the daily personal contact with each of my students that dialogue journals permit. The journals really help me get to know and appreciate all the talents, thoughts, creativity, and emotion, and the wealth of information my students possess. I love the individuality afforded by dialogue journals. I love responding to each child, and I'm just as curious as they are to see what's been written each day. I often sneak over at lunch time to see what one of my students has written, only because my curiosity has gotten the best of me, even though I won't have time to respond until later on.

One of my students summed it up best for me when, on the last day of the school year, she wrote:

> *I love you very much and I will always thinking about you...I will read what will I wrote on Dialogue Journals... I will always thinking about you because I had an Dialogue Journals to remember you are my teacher before right?*
> ☐ *YES!* or ☐ *NO*

Jean Slobodzian
Primary grade teacher
Kendall Demonstration Elementary School

I liked using dialogue journals because they worked for my students! The greatest benefit of dialogue journals was that they helped me meet the different language needs of my students, especially the ones who had an "I can't write" syndrome. It was wonderful to watch language skills blossom throughout the school year with some of my students. There were definitely some times when I was frustrated. My students kept drawing pictures, not responding to questions, not seeming motivated. All that was part of the natural process of learning, and it was paid for with positive outcomes at the end of the year!

Susan Searls
Primary Department
Kendall Demonstration Elementary School

A summer of research on dialogue journals convinced me that they were very valuable. What delighted me was finding evidence of English language growth in my students' writing, even in journals that had seemed inconsequential during the year. More exciting was the realization that the growth had occurred subconsciously; I wasn't planning on it, and neither my students nor I were aware that it was happening.

I realized that it was unneccessary for me to think every minute about improving my students' English skills, in order for learning to take place. I became more relaxed about using the dialogue journals. I began really to talk to my students, and thoroughly enjoyed the conversations. I have always loved my students, but never had the time to get to know each one as an individual. Dialogue journals have become very important in my classroom, helping my students and me build very special relationships. We look forward to writing in them every day; it has become a priority for all of us.

Cindy Bailes
English teacher
Model Secondary School for the Deaf

Developing a Bond Between Student and Teacher

Perhaps the greatest benefit of dialogue journals is the formation of a special bond between teacher and student, based on respect and shared experience. The bond enables students to see their teachers in a new light--as thinking, feeling individuals, not just people whose lives center around teaching, evaluation, and grades.

Students and teachers often discover shared interests that can intensify the relationship. Dialogue journals provide an opportunity for close, enjoyable interaction, as in the conversation below about schools and sign language. Clearly, the exchange between Nancy and her teacher is very different from typical classroom interactions, which provide little time to converse about topics unrelated to the curriculum.

Nancy: *Have you ever go to public school in your life before or not? How did you learn sign language?*

Teacher: *I went to public school until college. Then I went to Gallaudet. A deaf man taught me to sign.*

N: *Really, which do you like best sign language or speaking? Is it hard for you to understand what the teacher say to you, I mean lipreading?*

T: *I prefer sign language! It has become my chosen language. I used to get real frustrated in school because I had a hard time understanding! How about you?*

N: *Of course, that's the real reason I came here it's more easier for me to understand sign language than speech-read I mean reading lips all the time. Have you have any trouble with your teacher while in class?*

T: *I didn't really have a lot of trouble with my teachers, but my 4th grade teacher really felt deaf people were retarded. She wanted to have me moved to a school for the retarded. My mother became furious and had me moved out of her class! Other than that, nothing much happened. Did you have any problems?*

11-10 Are you still angry at me? I Not angry to Susan I am Nice to Susan ok.

Love
Jamie

11-14 Fine. You are not angry at me anymore. But you can feel angry at me. It is ok to feel angry I become angry sometimes

What do I do when I become angry? Susan Will angry at me You must Pinsh to Susan in Resse ok You must accpt OK Love Jamie :)

11-15 When I am angry, my face expressions show I talk out my feelings Sometimes I need to punish children I don't like to punish children I am

Behavioral problems can be discussed in the journal.

N: *Well, yes, it was the teacher who doesn't know anything about deaf people so I tried to explain to her and students but we don't have not time anyway. That's why I came here. How many years have you been working here?*

(The full text of this discussion can be found in Appendix B.)

While the value of a personal relationship with each individual student may be immediately obvious, teachers who work with dialogue journals often have difficulty seeing other, more extended benefits. Teachers and students may exchange journals regularly for a whole year without obvious changes in student performance. But when teachers take time to look at each long-term journal as a unit, they usually find clear evidence of individual progress. Every student benefits in some way, and it is unlikely that any two students in a class will show the same kinds or degrees of improvement.

Of course it is time consuming to try to analyze the benefits of each individual dialogue journal. This chapter pinpoints some of the positive results teachers might look for in their students at both elementary and high school levels, based on the research conducted at Gallaudet. The examples come directly from individual journals, or from interviews with students and teachers. The authors hope that after reading this chapter and the one on research, teachers will be more confident that the time they spend working on dialogue journals is well invested, even when student growth is not immediately evident.

Classroom Management

One common result of the dialogue journal relationship is to make classroom management an easier job for the teacher. After a few weeks of reading and writing in the journals, students learn that their teachers truly care about them as individuals. Students who have a friendly, understanding relationship with their teachers rarely cause classroom difficulties. Furthermore, any behavioral problems that do arise can be discussed, at great length

if desired, in the journals. Students and teachers can explore each others' perspectives on the problem, usually with good results.

Student: March 21
. . . do you rember that day I were mad with you I am sorry I did that because you were too strict for me. But I am not go to worry about it ok?

Teacher: March 22
I understand and I'm not mad at you. Sometimes when you act up in class I find myself becoming stricter with you. If you don't like that, what would be better? What do you want me to do? Thank you for cooperating with me in class today. I really felt lousy and when we were able to work so well together, I felt better. After class I was feeling good! You really helped me feel better! . . .

S: March 25
Yesterday I went home I watch TV at than I talk on the phone at 7:30 to 10:00 I went to bed.

T: *I asked you some questions yesterday. You did not answer my questions! I'm disappointed! Will you read what I wrote yesterday again and then answer my questions?*

S: *I dont really know what you could do if I act silly. well you just go ahead be stict to me if I act silly and make you feel real mad. That all I can said. but not all the time.*

T: March 27
(Student answers are in parentheses.)
Ok. I'll go ahead and be strict, but will you get mad at me? (No) Do you know why I get strict? (Yes)

Students as Experts

Occasionally, the dialogue journal process makes it possible for the student to take on the role of teacher. The student may be expert in a field the teacher is interested in but knows little about. That kind of situation can help improve the student's self esteem and remove the

stereotype of the teacher as omniscient authority. The following exchange is a good example.

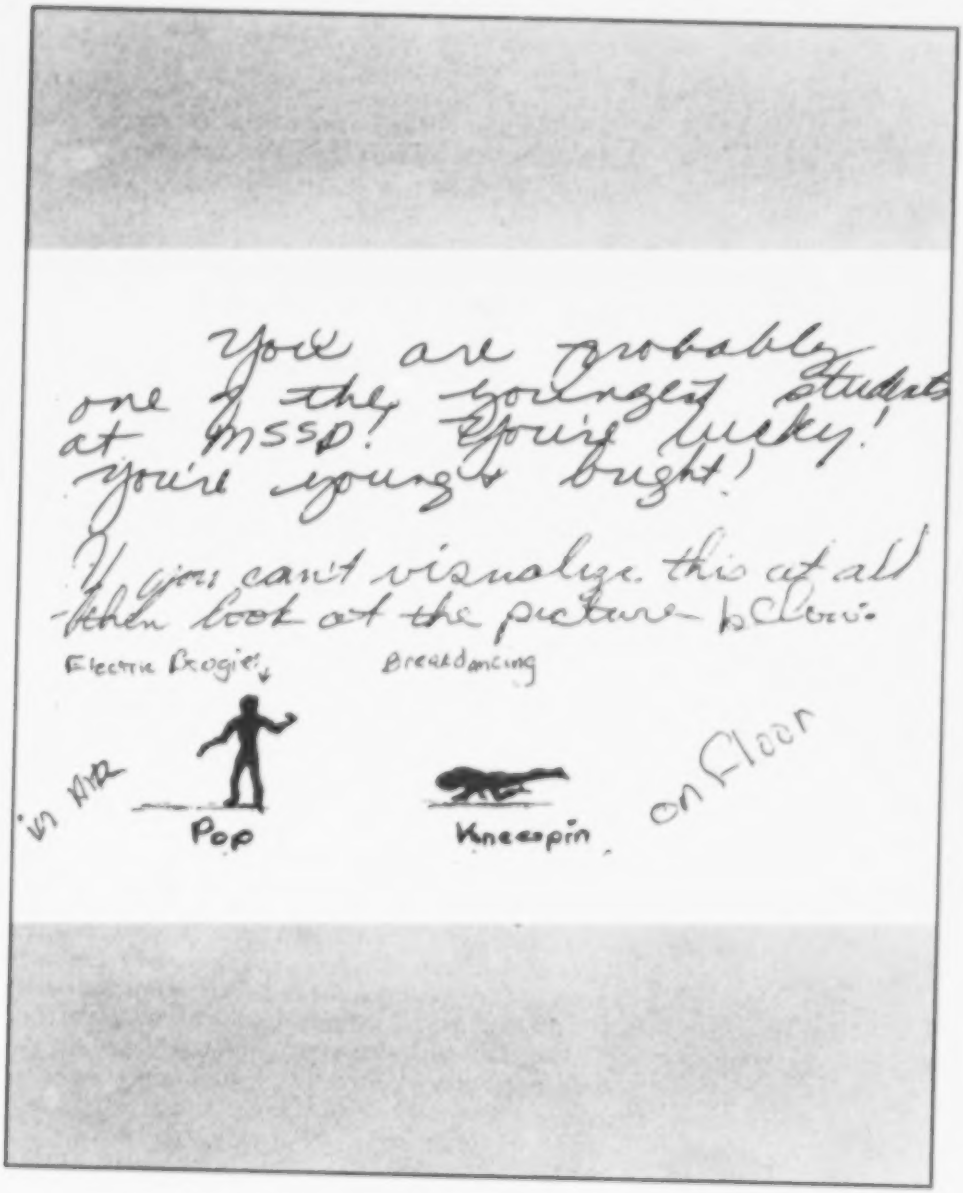
S: January 22, 1985
Yeah, but I'm not into karate. I'm into MUSIC and BREAKDANCING mostly electric boogie but I'm good at falling flat on my stomach.

T: January 23, 1985
Ha! Well, I wish I could breakdance, but it seems so complicated to me. What in the world is electric boogie?

S: February 1, 1985
It's like letting a electric wave throught your body it's the first part of breakdancing it started with Re-run on "What's Happened" and from there it started with a group called "The Foot Lockers" one of the first breakdance group including "Shabba Doo" who is not the star of "Breaking" and "Breaking 2" "The Electric Boogallo." I've seen the movie 6 or 7 times in 3 days it's a fantastic movie you should see it! What is your favorite kind of dance. I bet it's ballet. What do you mean by the word complicated. I bet anybody can learn it, it's simple. even Mike knows how to do it.

T: February 4, 1985
Complicated is the opposite of simple! Breakdancing seems very hard to me. I like all kinds of dancing and love to watch breakdancing and ballet, but I can't do either. I haven't been dancing in a long time, although I was a pretty good dancer before. I guess I'm getting old.
All that stuff you said about electric boogie was over my head! Can you explain it again?

S: February 4, 1985
AGAIN! O.K. but I'm not much of a teacher. I'm not going to explain it. I'm gonna do it in this book, read carefully.
right arm straight
bend right hand's wrist
bend hand up when you move your elbows up
elbows straight while shoulders go up


You are probably one of the youngest students at MSSD! You're lucky! You're young & bright!
If you can't visualize this at all then look at the picture below.
Electric Boogie
Breakdancing
Pop
Kneedpin
on floor

Sometimes the student can take on the role of teacher.

shoulder down checks out
check in knees out
then you go back up. I bet you don't know what I mean do you?

T: February 5, 1985
I understood you loud and clear, but I'm not sure my body will cooperate. Is the electric boogie different from breakdancing?

S: February 5, 1985
Well...electric boogie is dancing with your hands and feet standing up and breakdancing is dancing with your hands and feet on the floor. I remember when I borrow a book (Breakdance) from the LRC before Christmas vacation and on Thursday morning I returned it and they're blaming me because they can't find it.

T: February 6, 1985
I hope you can clear that up with the LRC! How in the world do you dance with your arms and feet standing up--as opposed to on the floor? I cannot visualize this at all!!!!

S: February 6, 1985
If you can't visualize this at all then look at the picture below.

Building New Writers

Dialogue journals enable teachers to concentrate on the practical uses of English as a written language. With little preparation time, dialogue journals present a relaxed opportunity for reading and writing English, allowing teachers and students to interact through language in a normal, conversational manner. That language-based interaction process is probably the most essential key to language development.

Most important for building writing competence, the dialogue interactions provide accurate, comprehensible input for deaf students. Neither speech nor sign systems represent written English completely and accurately. Written English is the major form of the language that

deaf students need to be able to use competently. In the dialogue journals, good written English is available for students to see, review, and imitate. When students write their messages in the dialogue journals, they can employ the cues to good English provided by the teacher's writing. No other classroom reading and writing task provides such a high degree of involvement and interaction.

One natural benefit of the interactive process is that students learn how to express their thoughts in written English. That new skill is particularly important for deaf students who may have spent eight or ten years in school experiencing writing as fixed, to be copied or imitated. In the dialogue journal, writing becomes a tool to help students express their own thoughts, their own inner vision.

Older students, who have learned how to write, may begin their dialogue journals with the standard formulas for personal logs they learned in elementary school. Most students learn standard formats by copying what the teacher has put on the blackboard, until they get it right. These kinds of stilted writing behavior, however, should change as students continue to read and write in their dialogue journals.

The first journal entry of one MSSD freshman, typical of the writing learned by many students, even has a topic heading at the top of the page and large daily labels.

WEEKEND

FRIDAY
Marion went to the Landover Mall last Friday night

SATURDAY
Anthony went to barber shop and he got cut his hair. Marion and Anthony went MacDonald, they bought hamburger, French fries, and chicken. Marion was made _____ in the oven. I ate pizza.

A year later, although she was still below average in academic achievement, the same student shows evidence in her dialogue journal of an ability to communicate in written English.

S: April 25, 1983
You probably have follow parent and you have F1 what that means first Generation (children). My brother and sister are F2 follow by parents.

Oh, I did met that boy, he is from Louisiana for going to Close Up in Washington, D.C. Where I met him on Gallaudet Campus. Because he wanted to see him girlfriend. She was Student at Gallaudet...

T: April 25, 1983
That's exciting news about Close-up. What do students in Close-up do? Also I didn't know that there is a special course. That's all about American Government, right? I'm sure you will learn a lot.

S: *OK I will explain you about Close up. I didn't, experience about Close up.... They watched a person who lectures about government also Deaf law. My friend she was told me that, she said really interested talked about Deaf law. I will take that course American Government. But if I pass that course sure I can going to Close up. Do you know that Close up stayed one weeks. Understand Friday, They were off campus visit MSSD and White House.*

The student's later entries show more evidence of difficulty with English syntax, but that is probably because they deal with more complex topics: explaining genetic laws to her teacher and speculating on the possibility of participating in a government seminar. Those kinds of difficulties should be welcomed as appropriate when students begin to use writing to explain abstract concepts, speculate on the future, evaluate their experiences, and demonstrate the other higher cognitive functions.

Dialog journals should not replace face-to-face communication between students and teachers. But these written conversations provide deaf students with the most

Now it is your turn to tell me a story about Paddington write a good story okay

About Paddington... I rea love him. I learned about Paddington in 1979 when I was flying back from Australia. A girl got on the plane, holding a stuffed animal under her arm. It was a bear and he had on a blue coat, yellow ~~hat and~~ a ~~bag~~ around his neck that said:

It was a Paddington bear! I will draw a Paddington now

Dialogues provide reading lessons in a form ideally suited to the students involved.

accurate, comprehensible English language input they can receive, without the distortions, gaps, or mixing of two representation systems that inevitably occur with signed English. Students find that their teachers' writing and their own entries are interesting, relevant reading materials. The teacher is able to comment about topics the student has introduced, adding new and valuable information every day.

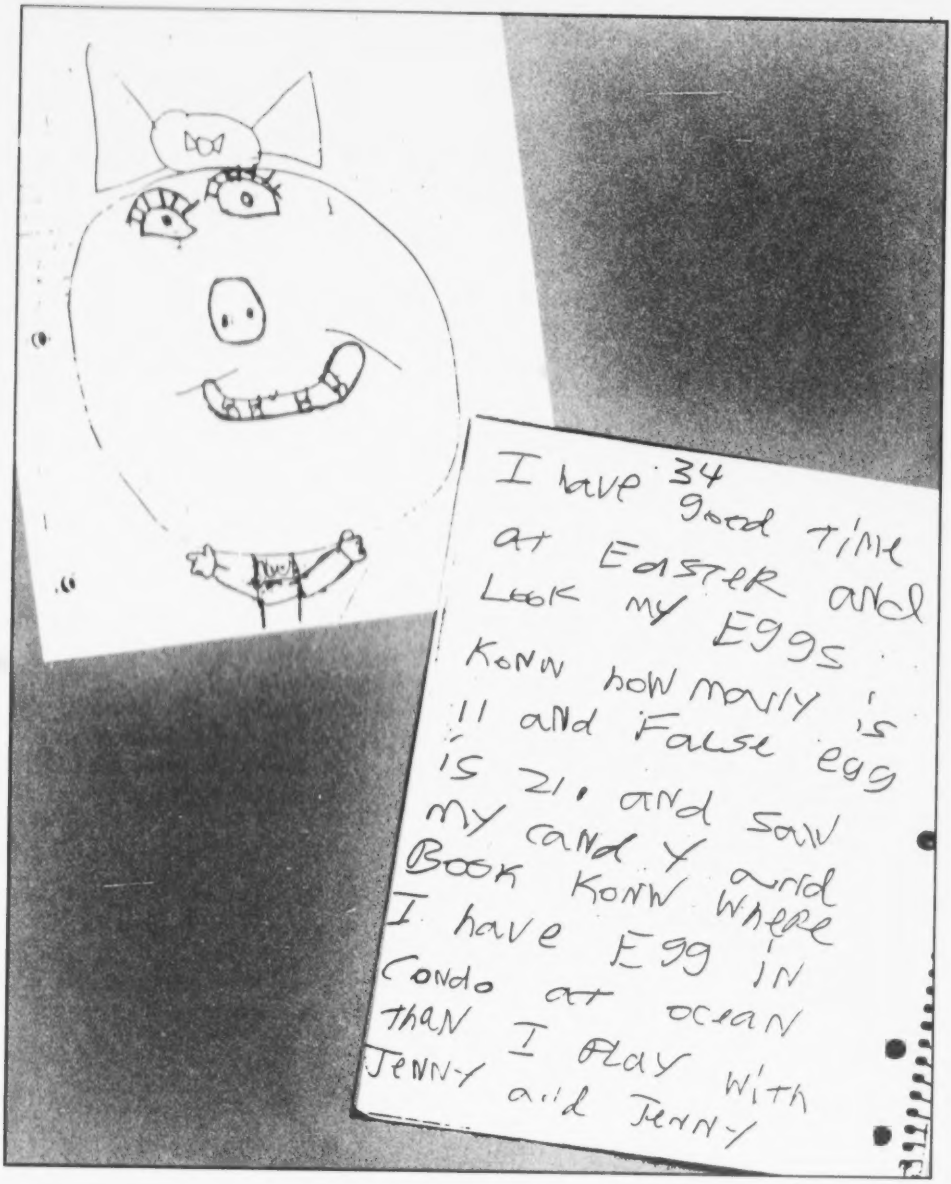
One primary teacher was reading *Paddington Bear* with her class. A bright student used her dialogue journal to ask the teacher to "Tell me a story about Paddington, and write a good story ok." That gave the teacher a wonderful opening for a true (and fascinating) story about how she first met Paddington Bear. That exchange provided a small reading lesson in a form ideally suited to the mind of a seven-year-old.

Deaf high school students often test at third or fourth grade reading levels. Yet a look at their dialogue journals will reveal that they are reading, understanding, and responding to their teachers' writing with no difficulty, often on a very appropriate adult level. It appears that once students get the idea that the dialogue journal constitutes a real conversation, they begin to read their teachers' entries very carefully; picking up not only the main topic, but also new idioms, inferences, or assumptions in the teacher's writing.

A New Way to Communicate

Most teachers want their students to acquire increased comfort and competence in using English for communication. Students who use dialogue journals for a substantial length of time do indeed show progress in the use of written English. The journals themselves serve to document that progress.

Younger children move from drawing pictures to writing syntactically correct English. Older children test out their current usages and make changes based on what they learn from the teacher's entries. All students gain experience in using a variety of language functions. Most school writing tasks tend to the repetition of facts and information. Dialog journals, among other things,



Children move painlessly from drawing pictures to writing.

give students an opportunity to ask questions, offer opinions, make predictions, and evaluate the world around them.

Student partners in these written dialogues are encountering grammatical forms as meaningful aspects of communication, rather than as dry patterns that must be memorized. Past tenses become significant and meaningful in the context of "what I got for Christmas." The correct use of prepositions becomes important to a student trying to explain where he went with his friends and why they did the things they did.

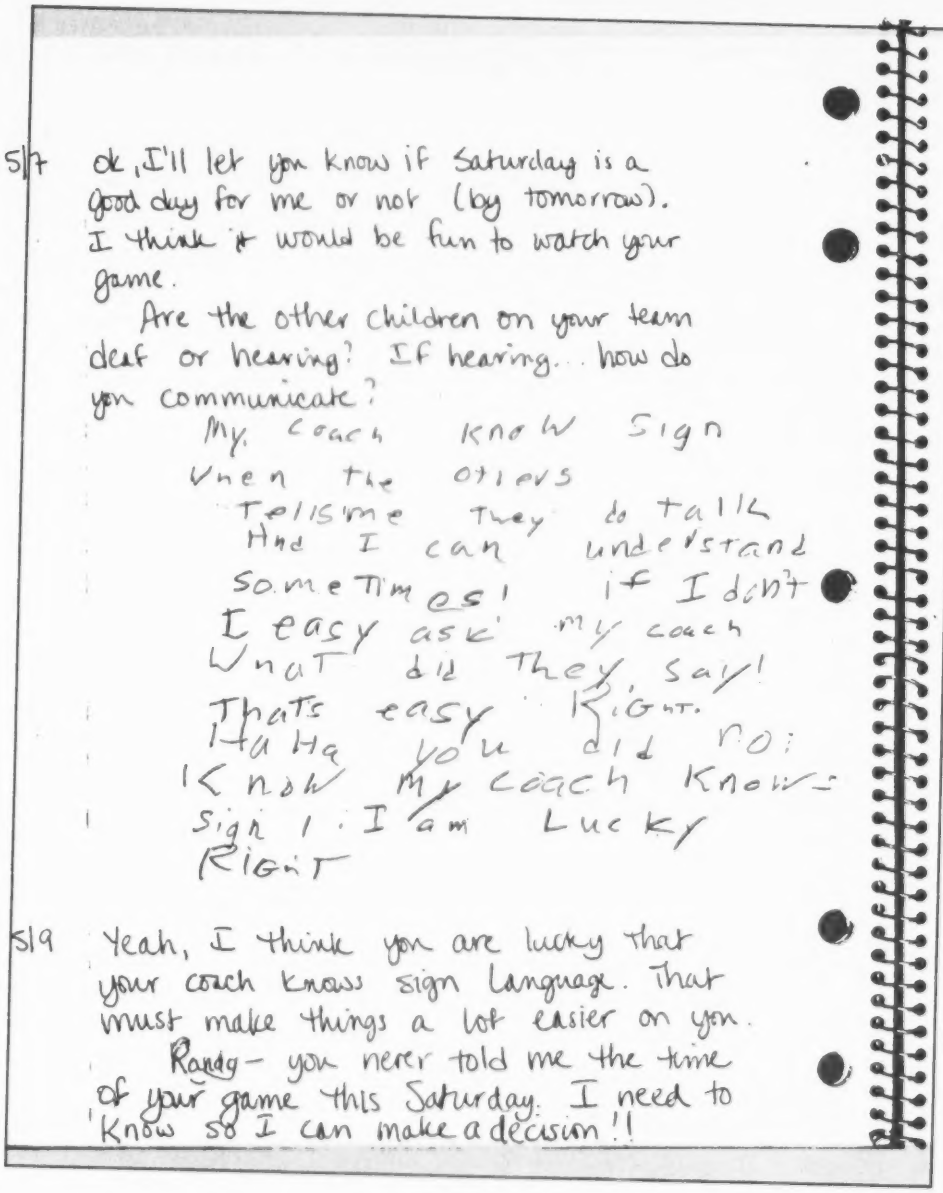
Through dialogue journals, children are exposed to a rich, unsequenced variety of language use—very different from the controlled vocabulary and grammatical structures found in standard reading texts. Research demonstrates that young children learn the grammar of their family language through intensive exposure, without specific attention to forms or rules. Children somehow select and acquire the grammatical features they need at any given time. The following examples of journal writing demonstrate the kinds of language learning that takes place.

One elementary student (example pg. 68) progressed from drawing face pictures with very brief captions in the fall, to a rather complicated story about Easter vacation the following spring.

This high school student showed a similar degree of progress, particularly in learning not to overuse the word "to."

S: February 1982
My parent was very happy with me so my parent want to Jim'll more improve in class than now. We are very happy that you teach to me about English and I have learn to driving the class.... Jim likes to my class because I only likes to four girls in my classes for 1 years.

S: June 1982
When you children will drive to go to Georgia to visit their grandmother. I am happy you stay with us



5/7 ok, I'll let you know if Saturday is a good day for me or not (by tomorrow). I think it would be fun to watch your game.

Are the other children on your team deaf or hearing? If hearing... how do you communicate?

My coach know sign
When the others
Tell me they do talk
And I can understand
Sometimes if I don't
I easy ask my coach
What did they say!
Thats easy RIGHT.
Ha Ha you did not
know My coach Knows
sign ! I am Lucky
RIGHT

5/9 Yeah, I think you are lucky that your coach knows sign language. That must make things a lot easier on you.

Randy - you never told me the time of your game this Saturday. I need to know so I can make a decision!!

Students are personally involved in the reading they do in their dialogue journals.

in class teach us. But you'll miss our class because school has soon and final school on June 24. But I am very early home.

An analysis of this student's journal shows that in the first third of the notebook he used "to" appropriately only 32 percent of the time. In the last third, however, the frequency of appropriate use doubled to 64 percent. That improvement occurred without formal instruction in the proper use of "to" either as a preposition or with an infinitive. Furthermore, the teacher made no particular effort to model appropriate use of "to" in her writing.

Sometimes this kind of language growth is very evident to the teacher, as documented in the first example where the student obviously stops using just pictures and starts communicating in written language. The high school teacher in the second example, however, had no idea that her student's writing was improving so much. She became aware of the changes only after a formal analysis of the student's dialogue journal writing. The improved use of "to" was only one example of growth that was evident in this student's dialogue journal. Teachers can be assured that this kind of language change occurs naturally when students are being exposed to lots of interesting, accurate English writing in their dialogue journals and other reading.

A Good Reason to Read

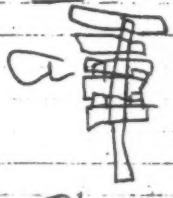
Another likely benefit of dialogue journal use is improved reading comprehension. Every day the students have an opportunity to read written English in their journals. They are also, of course, expected to complete regular reading assignments in their reading and content area classes. The difference is that students are almost certain to be deeply involved in the reading they do in their dialogue journals, making that task easier and more exciting.

The dialogue journal is unique in providing students with at least equal power to introduce topics of discussion. Since students bring up most of the subjects, they will be reading about matters that are intrinsically

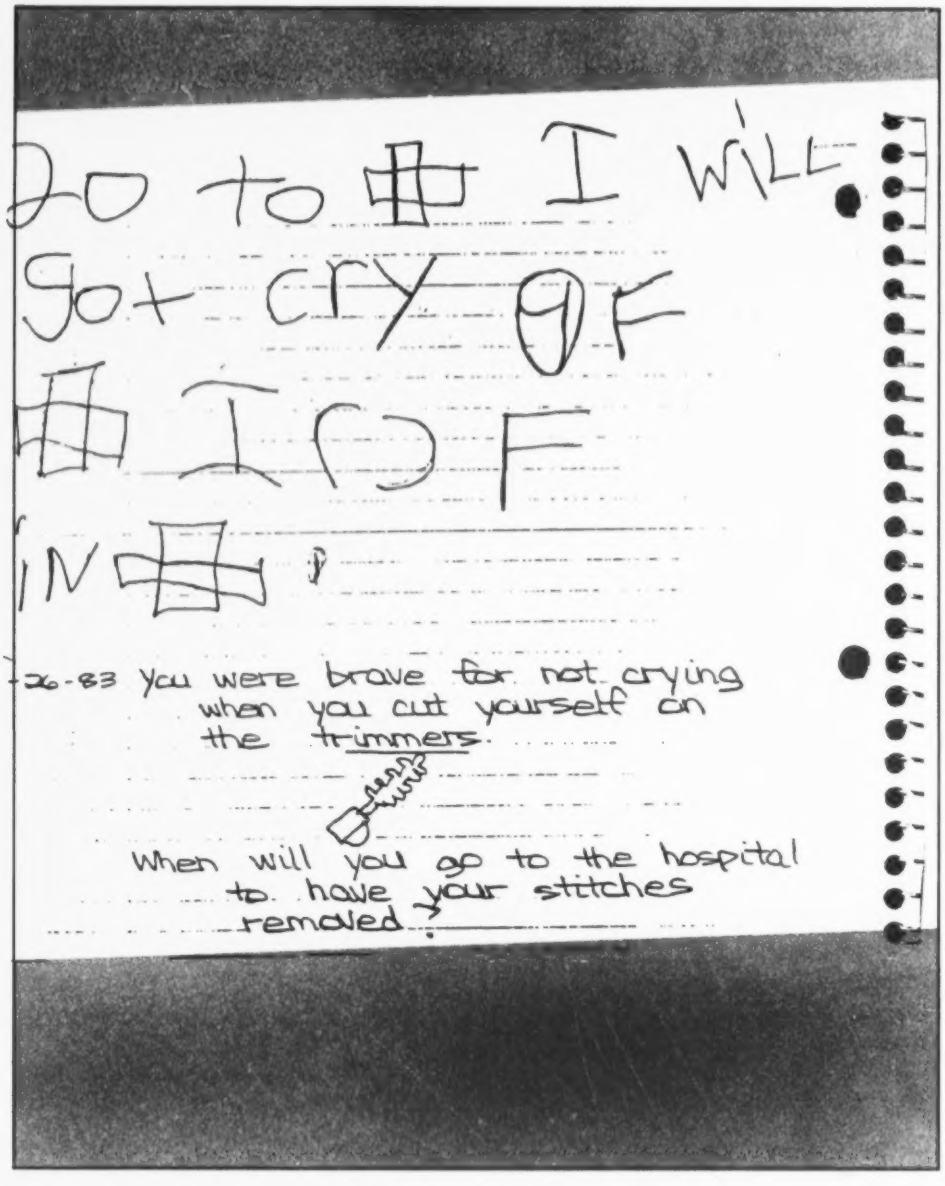
9-23-83

You can call E.I an half person and half animal
Please tell me why E.I is your favorite animal/person.

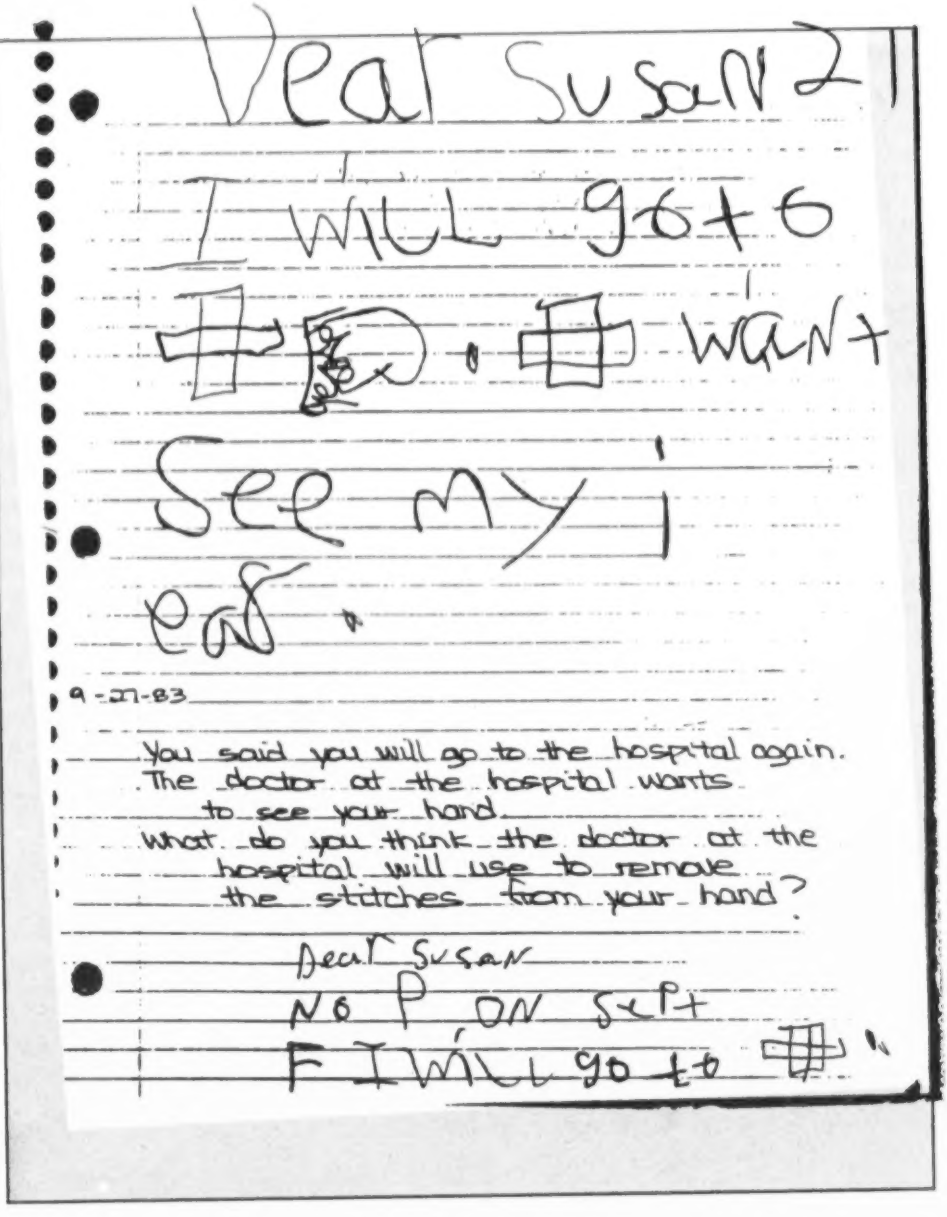
Dear Susan

I play on a  I got ON Blood I not cry, But my dad side must go (over)

This student tells a whole story about her accident (also see pages 73 and 74).


I WILL
26-83 You were brave for not crying when you cut yourself on the trimmers.
When will you go to the hospital to have your stitches removed?

The teacher responds to help build the narrative.


Dear Susan I
I will go to
I want
see my
cat.
9-27-83
You said you will go to the hospital again.
The doctor at the hospital wants
to see your hand.
What do you think the doctor at the
hospital will use to remove
the stitches from your hand?
Dear Susan
NO P ON Sept
F I WILL go to

When words are missing, the student draws signs to continue the dialogue.

interesting to them. Consequently, their comprehension of the teacher's writing will be high. Interviews with teachers make it clear that even students who have difficulty with classroom reading assignments are successful in reading even harder materials in their dialogue journals.

The ability to answer questions is a simple indicator of reading comprehension. Research with individual journals at the high school level indicates that students who initially have difficulty answering their teachers' written questions improve significantly in that area over time.

Preliminary research (Shuy, 1985) indicates that use of dialogue journals involves students in reading with comprehension at higher levels than their SAT-HI scores would indicate. In fact, the research also seems to indicate that an analysis of student reading in the dialogue journal offers a clearer picture of reading ability than standardized test scores.

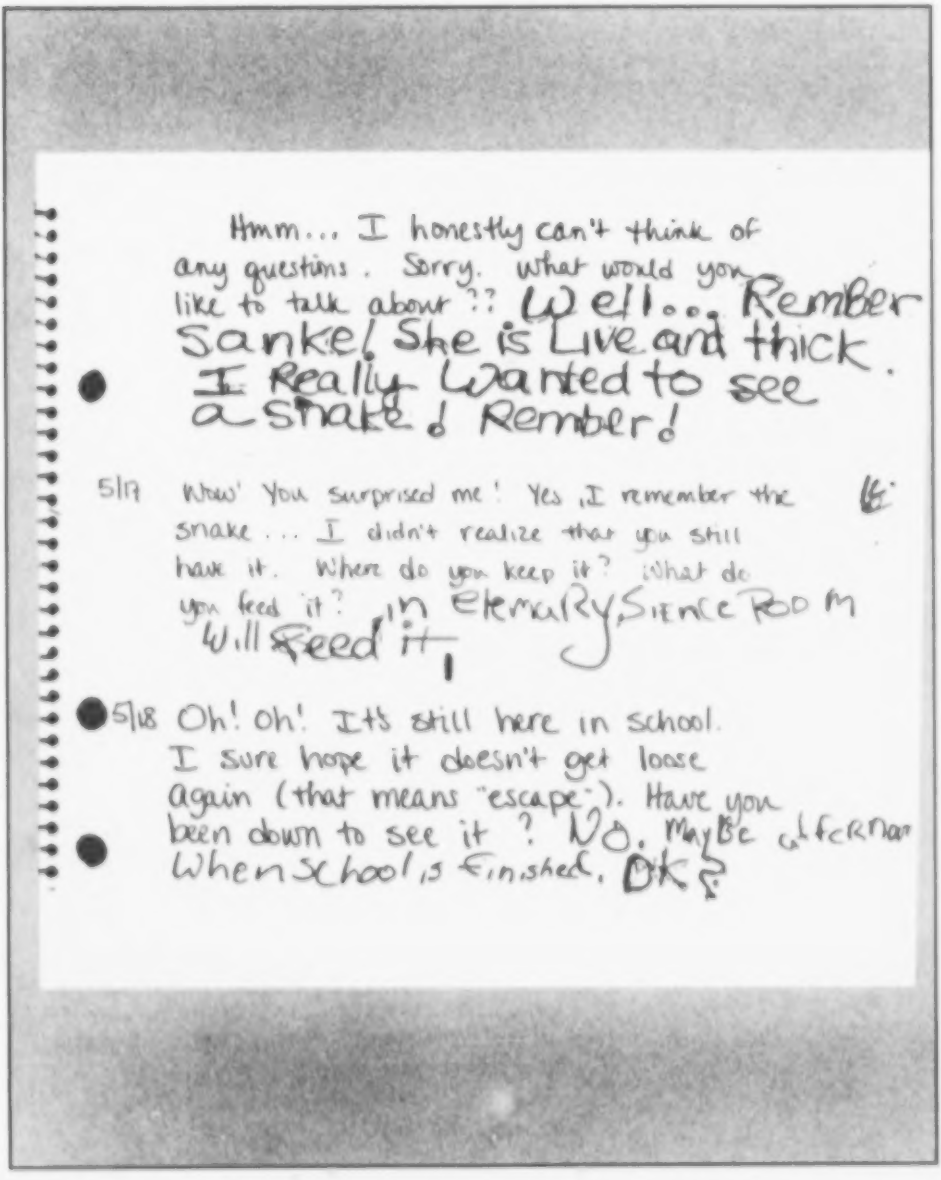
A Tool for Thinking

Dialogue journal use can help students improve their use of higher cognitive skills. Insightful teachers who go beyond conversational writing (asking and answering questions, reporting facts) can use the dialogue to encourage student experimentation with higher orders of thinking. Teachers might model advanced thinking processes, or might question and comment on student entries in a way that will stimulate higher cognitive functions. Staton has written on this phenomenon, which she calls interactional scaffolding.

The following exchange with a bright seven-year-old is a clear example of how a teacher introduces causal reasoning (if-then) without realizing it, and then encourages the student to join in.

S: *I want to be football team and I want to be on Redskins team or watch football. Mostly I want to be football team.*

T: *Now tell me, what position are you interested in playing? Offense or defense?*



Hmm... I honestly can't think of any questions. Sorry. what would you like to talk about?? Well... Rember Sanke! She is Live and thick. I Really Wanted to see a Snake! Rember!

5/17 Wow! You surprised me! Yes, I remember the snake... I didn't realize that you still have it. Where do you keep it? What do you feed it? In Elementry Science Room Will Feed it

5/18 Oh! Oh! It's still here in school. I sure hope it doesn't get loose again (that means "escape"). Have you been down to see it? No. Maybe afternoon When school is Finished. Ok?

Dialogue Journals allow teachers and students to think together.

S: *I don't know. Maybe quaterback or PC. Riggins. I love to be quaterback and I want to be quarterback!*

T: *If you were the quarterback, then you would tell all the other members of the team what to do. You would be the boss. Would you like being the leader?*

S: *Yes! Ha Ha Ha. Now I will pass the ball to other players...*

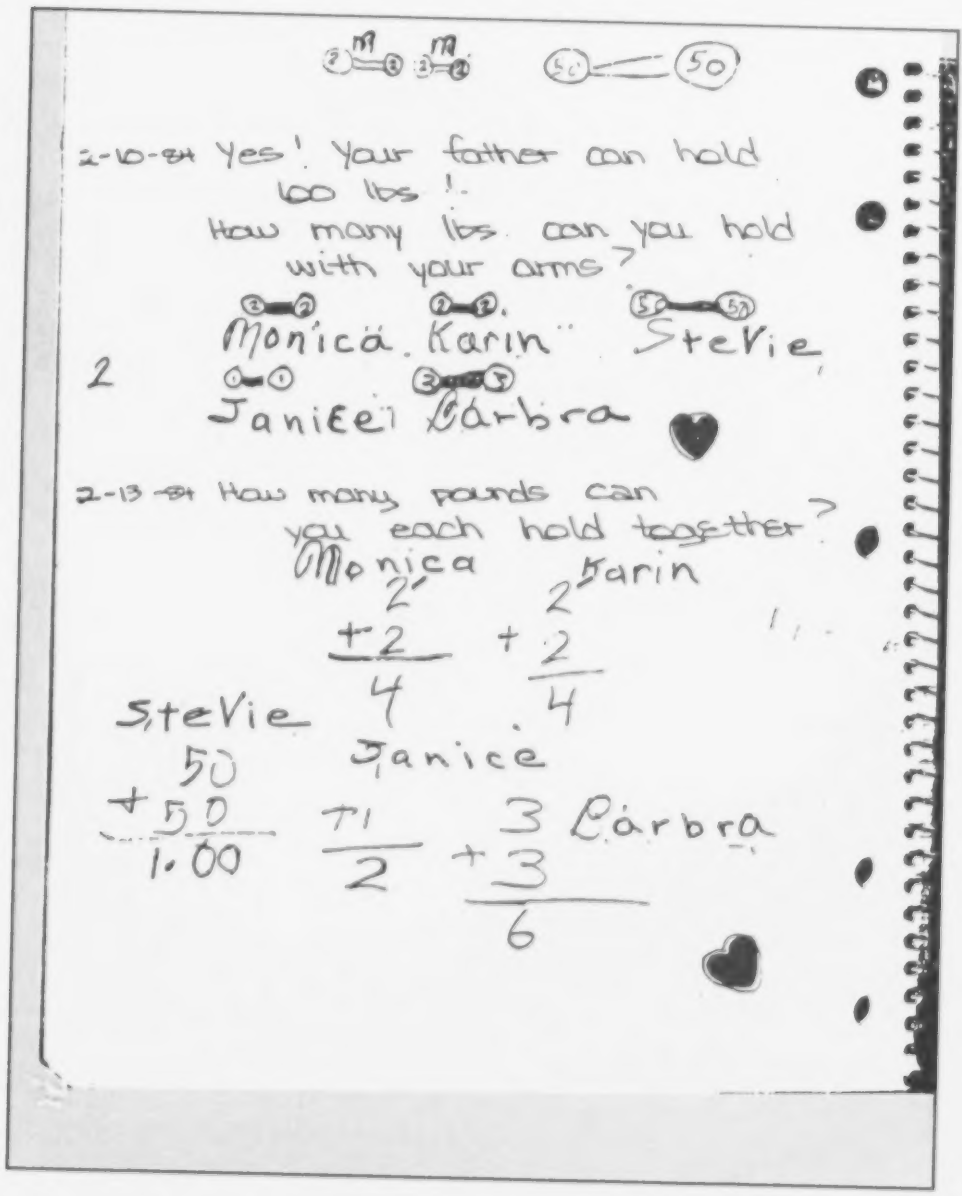
Obviously, dialogue journals allow students and teachers to think together in writing. The key ingredient of that process is the teacher's mind, to which the dialogue journal provides access. Teachers who use their minds to form opinions, ask genuine questions, describe what happens and why in interesting ways, will find dialogue journals an almost perfect medium for modeling those skills.

The "Scaffolding" Function

Journals enable teachers to go far beyond rote instruction, providing a scaffold of support and reinforcement for English expression. Teachers can encourage individual students toward active mental processing of current experiences and knowledge by introducing new concepts and advanced strategies for thinking (Staton, 1984b). No textbook, videotape, or computer is able to replicate the active and interested mind of a teacher "thinking together" with a student who is engaged in learning.

Dialogue journals of KDES students as young as six or seven years show examples of this mutual participation of teacher and student in language learning activities. The teacher takes on the task of clarifying and completing what the student writes, reinterpreting it in clear, grammatical English.

Note that the teacher supplies a scaffolding of meaningful responses and interpretations that assist the student in writing a comprehensible story. In this example, the teacher asks questions, translates the student's pictograms and ASL signs into English, and subtly rewords the information to make it clearer.



Guesses about weight lifting became an interesting game.

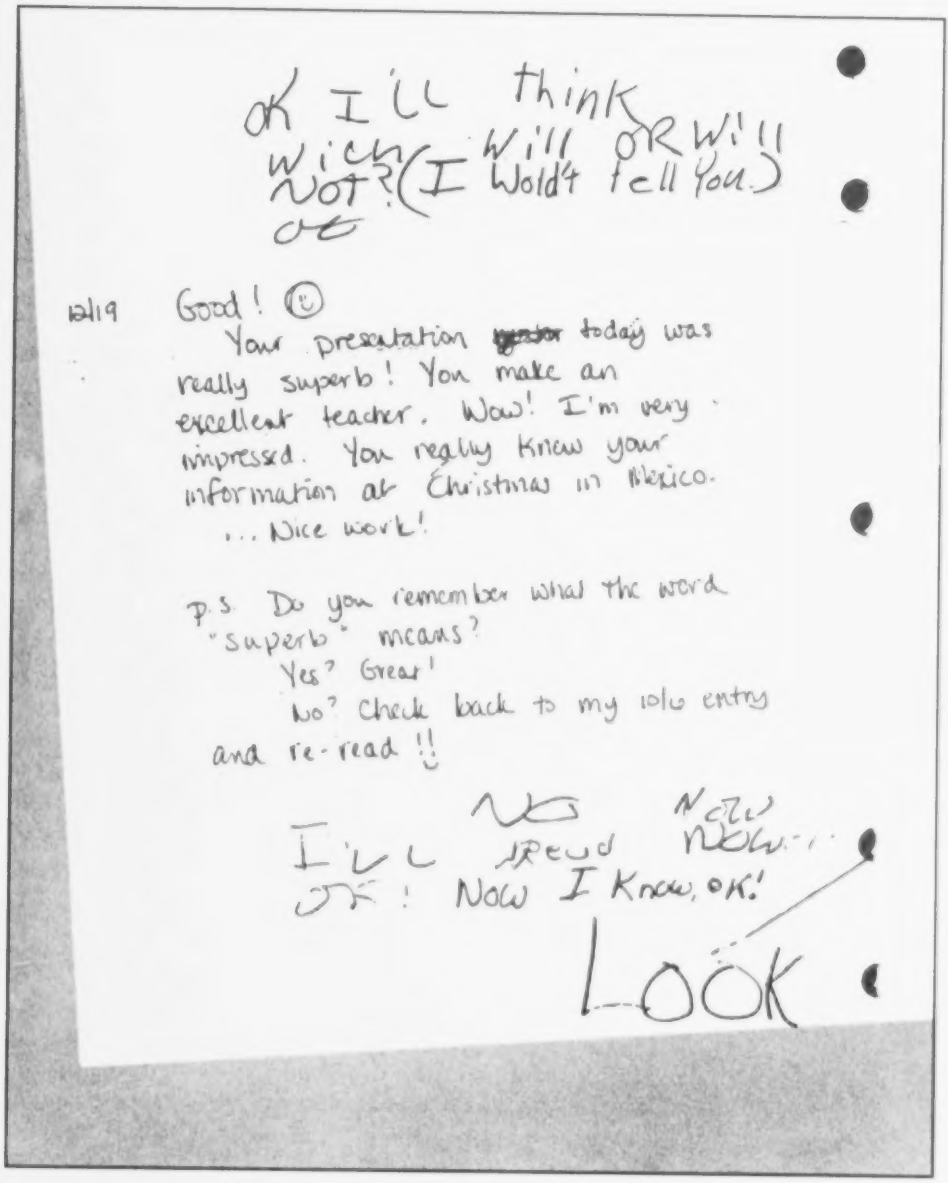
As the year progresses, very young students assimilate more and more from their teachers' dialogue entries, using new vocabulary and language structures in their dialogue journals and for other reading and writing classwork. By spring, this same student accomplishes the task of telling a story without the teacher's coaching and interpretation.

Another example of how students learn both language and reasoning skills through mutual written discussion is the following extended dialogue on addition. That discussion came up naturally when a student started writing about her father's weightlifting. The teacher invented a kind of game—guessing how much various people might be able to lift, then adding up the weights. The student willingly continued playing with the figures for seven more days.

New Keys to Understanding the World

The dialogue process provides a natural support for students as they elaborate and expand their understanding of the world they live in. Of course the same kind of support can occur in face-to-face communication. But it is crucial for deaf students to experience written English as a meaningful, cognitively demanding language they can use to express their thoughts. Dialogue journals offer clear examples of students beginning to use written English to offer opinions, speculate on the future, ask probing questions about why things happen--in short, using English as a tool for expressing critical thought.

Another definite benefit for students using the dialogue journals is the prospect of increasing personal knowledge through incidental learning. Students can acquire a vast amount of practical information through dialogue journal use, in widening circles that include the classroom, the school, and the world around them. New knowledge, a chance to pursue specialized interests, and broader perspectives on life's possibilities are suddenly available. Beyond the constructive dialogue with the teacher, a knowledgeable and concerned adult, dialogue journals offer students a glimpse at the endless potential for use of written English.



Most teachers find dialogue journal writing enjoyable and relaxing.

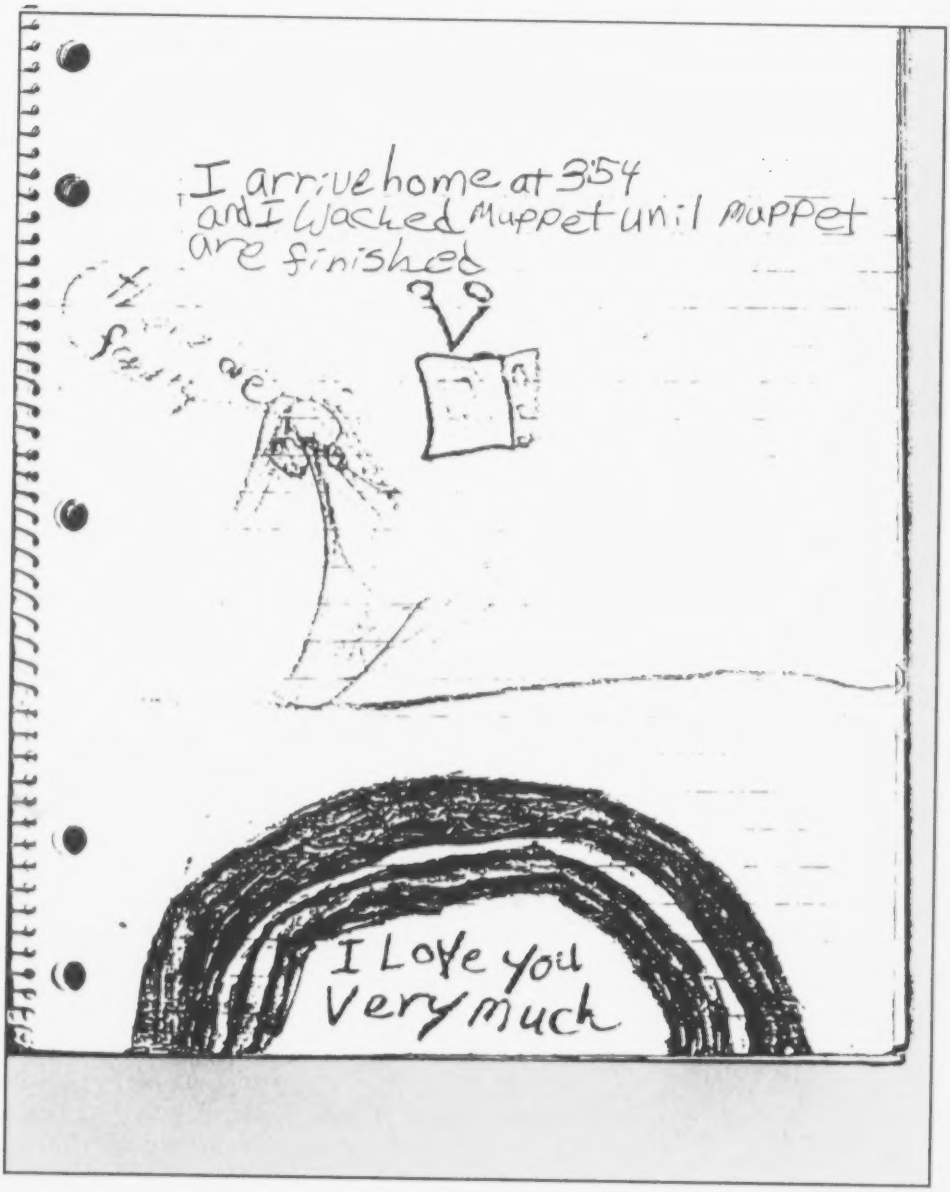
Students can also rehearse other communication tasks without constraint. Teachers can serve as sounding boards for either formal or informal communication, helping students polish their ideas and their skills for later use, and lightening the burden of self-consciousness about using English. Students who feel good about their communication skills are more likely to take risks with language, push their own limits, and explore new paths. The teacher's nonjudgmental role as a dialogue journal correspondent can do much to enhance this growth.

Helping the Teacher Teach

The concept of the dialogue journal is flexible enough to meet the needs of a wide range of teaching styles. Teachers who decide to use dialogue journals with their students do not need to learn new teaching methods or theories. At the same time, they can use dialogue journals to individualize instruction and counseling for each child.

Dialogue journals do not require the purchase of commercial materials, or set teachers to the task of inventing formats, objectives, and activity plans. All that is required on a daily basis is enough time to write thoughful responses. Even that task usually becomes fairly spontaneous once the teacher and student have established lines of communication. Most teachers discover that the routine of writing in dialogue journals every day is enjoyable and relaxing. They find themselves curious to see what their students have written, and eager to respond.

That personal bonus for the teacher, along with predictable gains in student learning, should convince even the most skeptical educator to give dialogue journals a chance. Teachers who give the process a fair trial, and allow themselves enough time to become comfortable using them, will find that continued use of the journals offers important benefits that go far beyond the effort expended.



After the student writes, what do you write back?

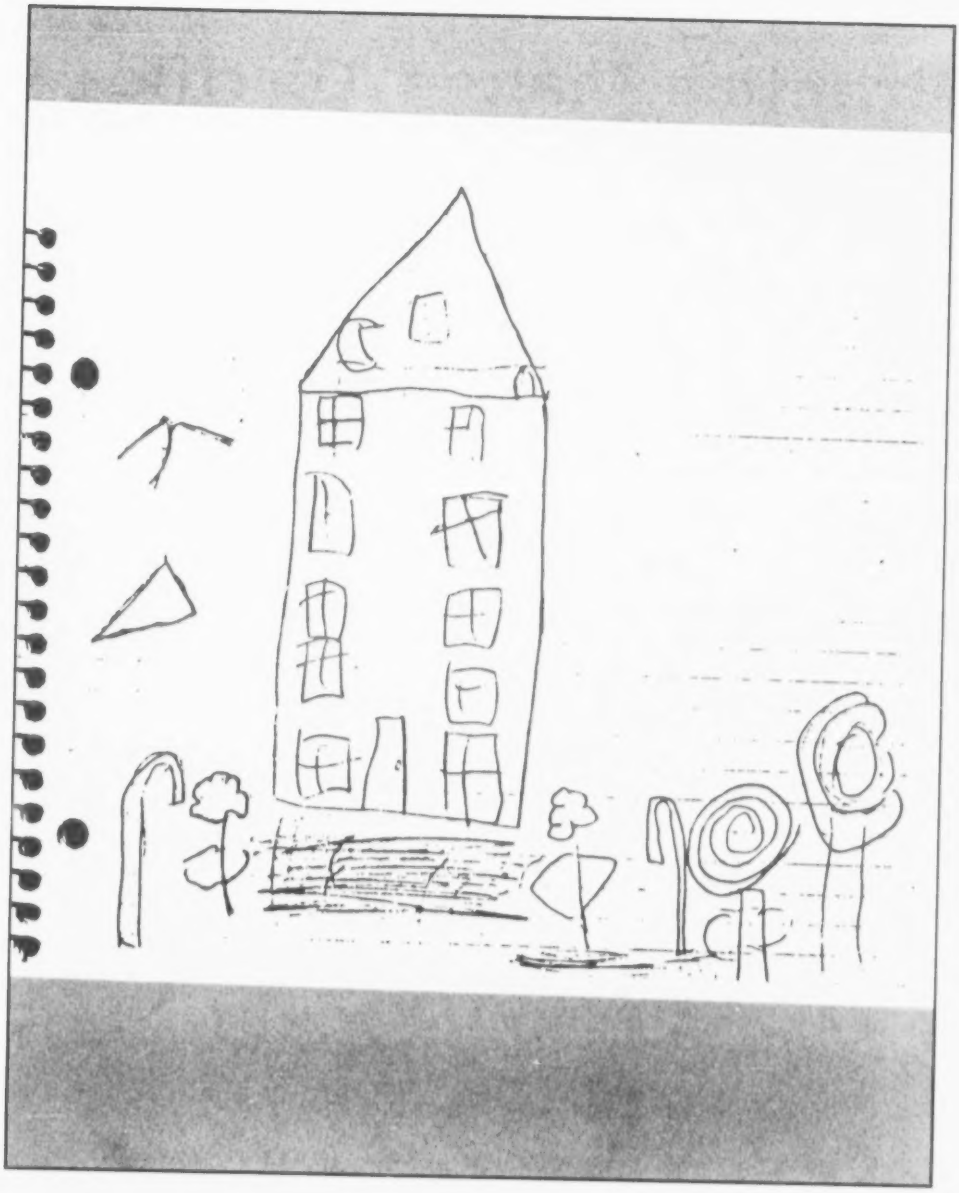
Chapter VI

Practice Makes Terrific

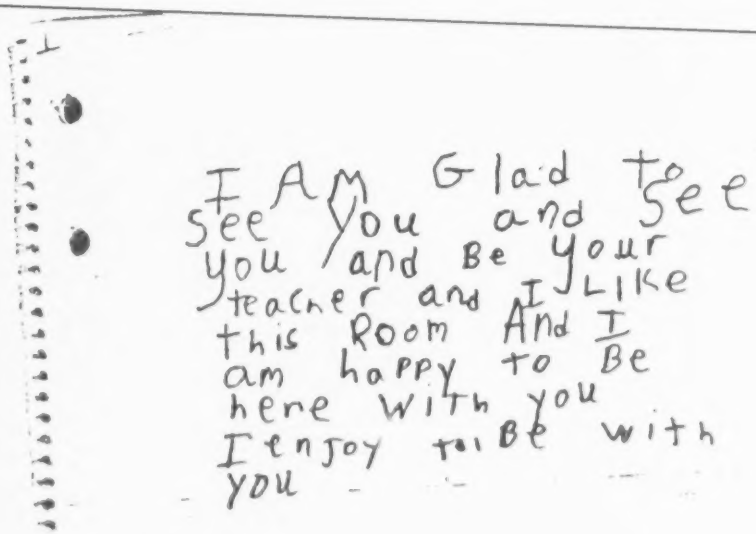
By now, you have read a lot of theories, dealt with a long list of questions, and seen many examples of dialogue journal writing. Perhaps the idea sounds good to you, but you are a little hesitant to start using journals with your classes. What bothers many teachers is the realization that after the students write their first entries, it's the teacher's job to write back. What to say?

This chapter is designed as a series of practice exercises. It consists of a number of first-day student entries, selected from authentic dialogue journals. After each entry, there is space for you to write what you consider an appropriate response. Then, just for comparison, the original teacher's entry is also included.

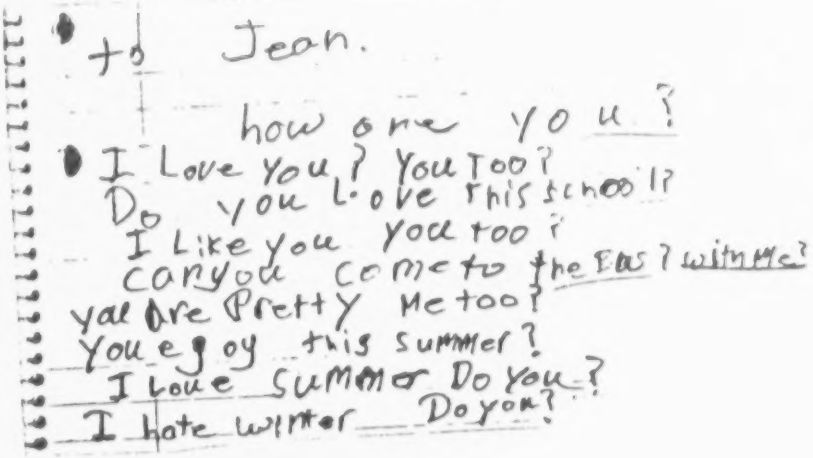
Remember, even if your response is different from the one written by the teacher, as long as it is a natural, honest reply to the student's entry, it is correct. Just write your responses as though you were one partner in a friendly dialogue with a particular student.



Like most young students, Andrea starts her journal with a drawing.


I AM Glad to
See You and See
you and Be your
teacher and I Like
this Room And I
am happy to Be
here With you
I enjoy to Be with
you

Bryan's first day message is cheerful and friendly.


to Jean.

how are you?

I Love you? You too?
Do you Love this school?
I Like you you too?
can you come to the Bus? with me?
you are Pretty Me too?
You enjoy this summer?
I Love Summer Do you?
I Hate winter Do you?

Cindy starts out full of questions.

I'm ~~Tara~~ from St. Louis, Mo.
Where do you live? Do you have husband?

David offers information and asks questions.

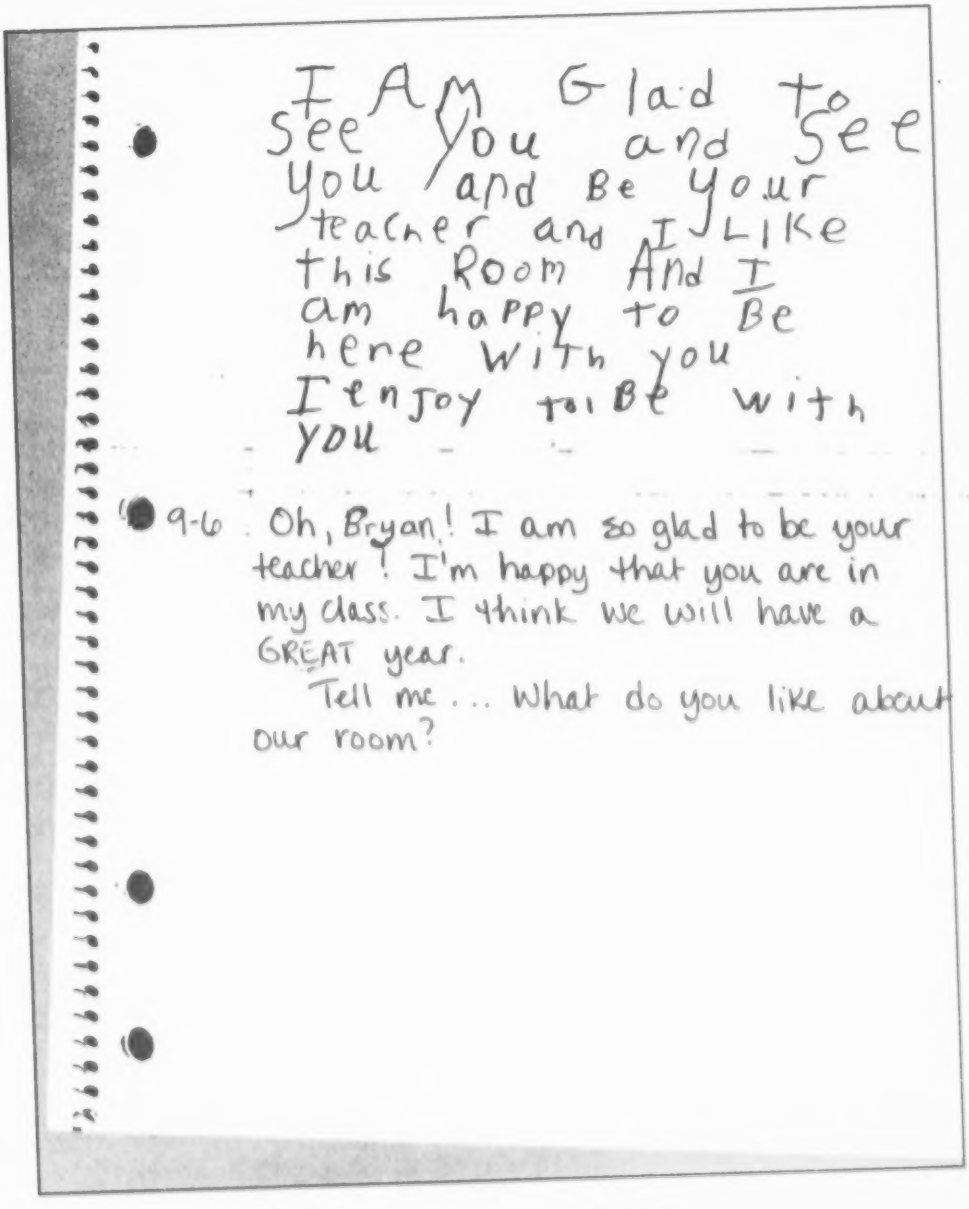
Sometimes, I have a problems with my schedule and sometimes my advisor not there, what shall I do?

Ellen seeks help with a scheduling problem.

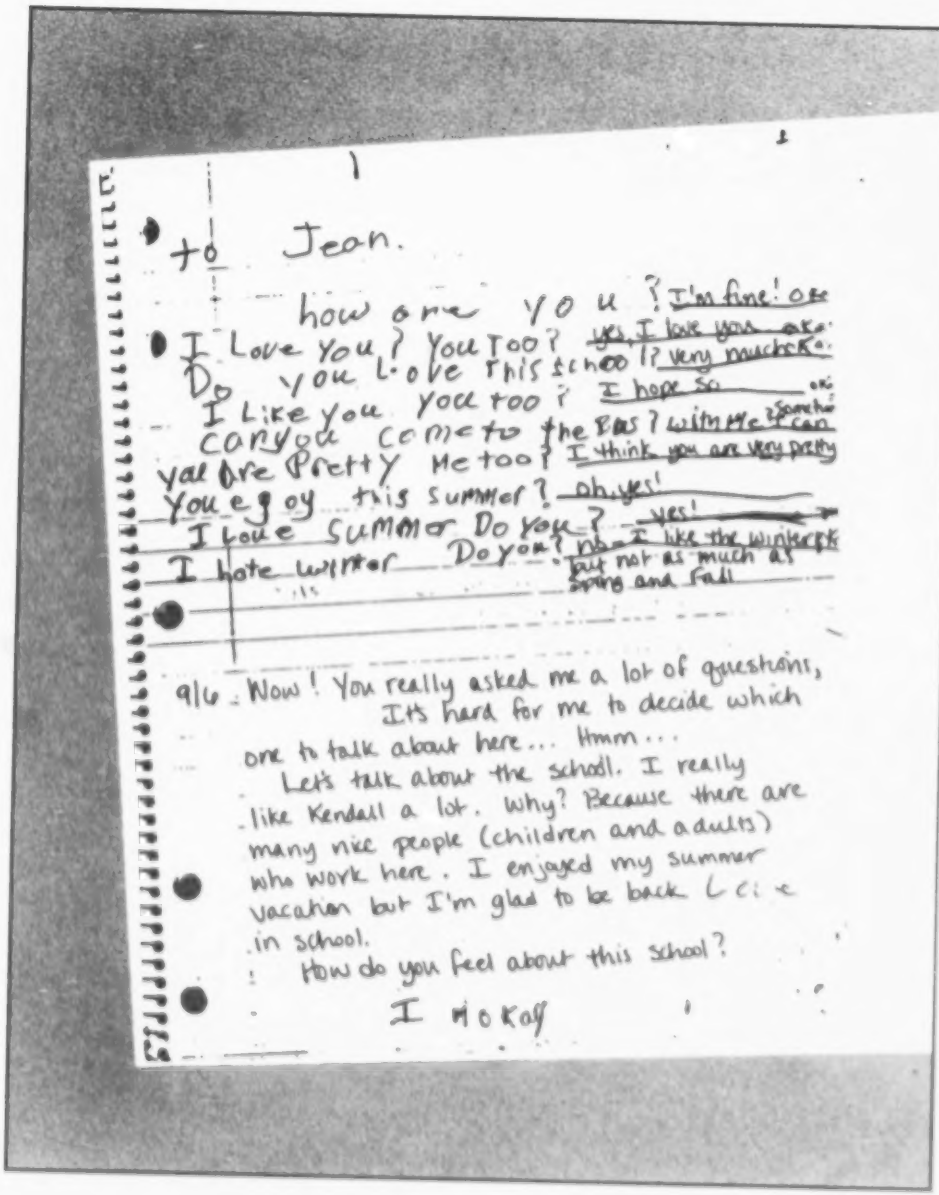
Where you from?
HOw many Year you work here?
how You Know Shng Larng?

Gary is frankly curious in his first-day entry.

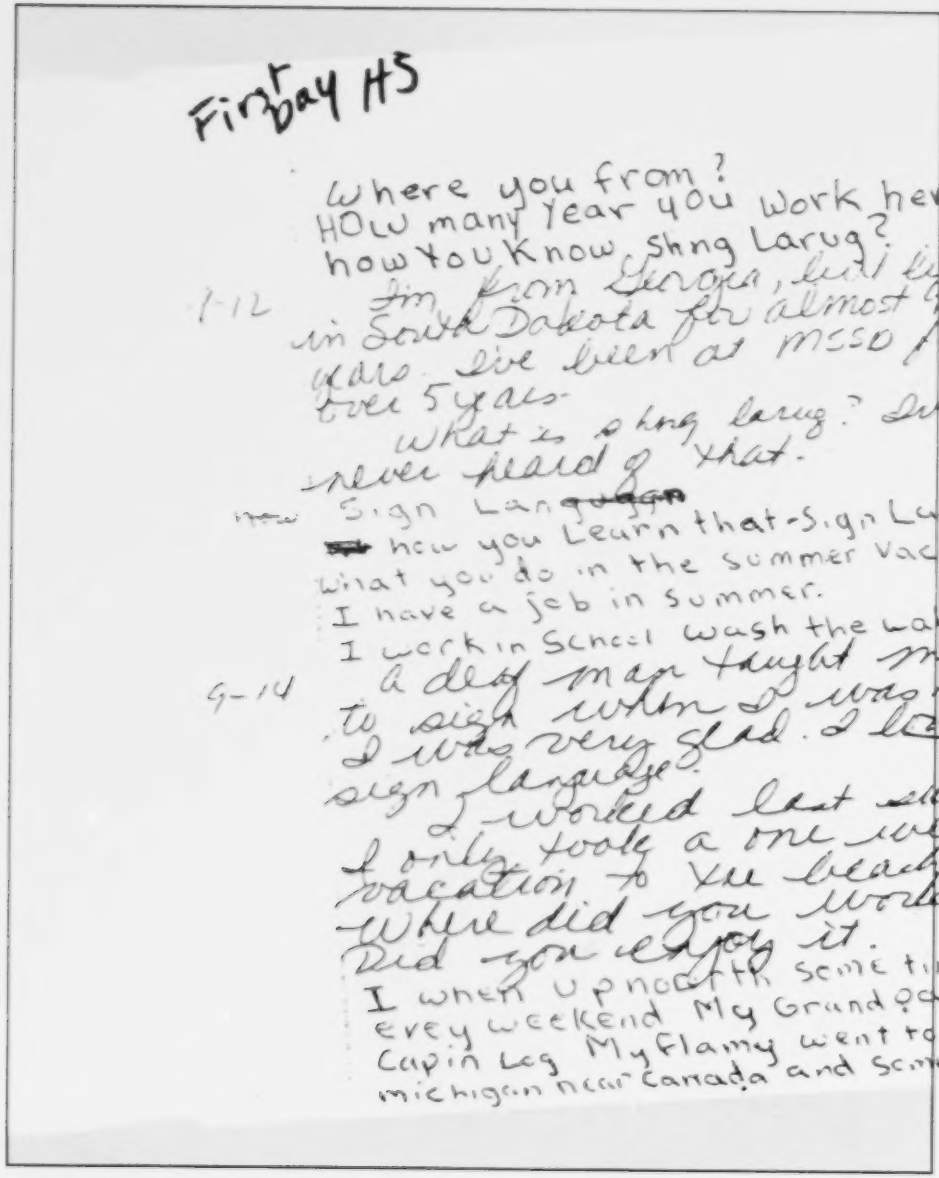
The teacher asks questions about the drawing to open the dialogue with Andrea.


I Am Glad to
See You and See
you and Be your
teacher and I Like
this Room And I
am happy to Be
here with you
I enjoy to Be with
you
9-6 Oh, Bryan! I am so glad to be your teacher! I'm happy that you are in my class. I think we will have a GREAT year.
Tell me... What do you like about our room?

This teacher builds a response on Bryan's friendly message.


to Jean.
how are you? I'm fine! ok
I Love you? You too? yes, I love you also.
Do you Love this school? very much so.
I Like you You too? I hope so ok
Can you come to the Ball? with me? I can
ya'll are Pretty Me too? I think you are very pretty
You enjoy this summer? oh yes!
I Love Summer Do you? yes!
I hate winter Do you? no - I like the winter
but not as much as
spring and fall
9/6 Now! You really asked me a lot of questions,
It's hard for me to decide which
one to talk about here... Hmm...
Let's talk about the school. I really
like Kendall a lot. Why? Because there are
many nice people (children and adults)
who work here. I enjoyed my summer
vacation but I'm glad to be back Love
in school.
How do you feel about this school?
I'm OKay

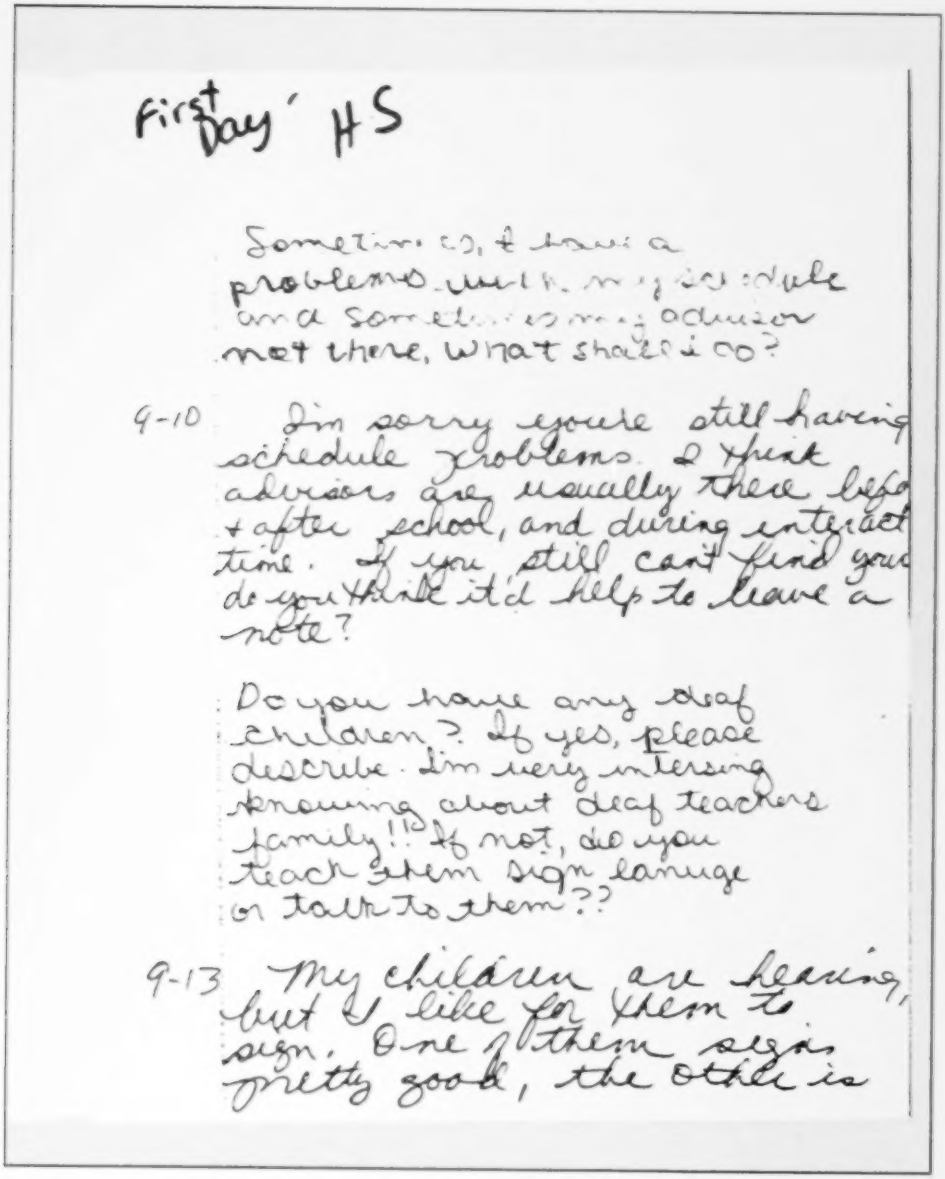
Cindy's questions make the first response easy.



First day HS

Where you from?
HOW many Year you work here
how you Know Shng Larug?
I-12 Im from Europa, but I liv
in South Dakota for almost 9
years. Ive been at MSSD fo
over 5 years.
What is shng larug? Ive
never heard of that.
now Sign Lan~~guage~~
~~how~~ how you Learn that-Sign Lan
what you do in the summer Vaca
I have a jeb in summer.
I work in School wash the wall
6-14 a deaf man taught me
to sign when I was 1
I was very glad. I lea
sign language.
I worked last su
I only took a one wee
vacation to the beach
Where did you work
Did you enjoy it.
I when up north some ti
every weekend My Grandpa
Cupin Log My Flamy went to
michigan near Canada and some

The teacher answers David's questions, then asks for more clarification.



First Day' HS

Sometimes, I have a problem. Like my schedule and sometimes my advisor not there, What shall I do?

9-10 Jim sorry you're still having schedule problems. I think advisors are usually there before + after school, and during enterest time. If you still can't find your do you think it'd help to leave a note?

Do you have any deaf children? If yes, please describe. Jim very intersing knowing about deaf teachers family!!! If not, do you teach them sign lanuge or talk to them??

9-13 My children are hearing, but I like for them to sign. One of them sign pretty good, the other is

This answer starts the dialogue by suggesting ways Ellen might solve her own problem.

I'm [redacted] from St. Louis, Mo.
Where do you live? Do you have husband?

9-27 I live in Cheverly Maryland, but I'm originially from Georgia. I have no husband.
What made you decide to come to MSSD?
I'm from leaving high school. It's hard to understand for me that is why I came here to understand the teacher better but I still like to stay St. Louis.

10-1 Yes, you are a long way from home. I can understand how you feel being such a ways from your family. But are you glad you decided to come to MSSD?

The response to Gary provides information and offers sympathy and welcome.

Chapter VII

A Look at the Research

If you are like most teachers, you want to know how to use new ideas or activities for your classes without having to read a lot of research and theory. Because the dialogue journal practice began in the classroom as a teacher-developed activity, it can easily be started without intensive training or study. However, during their first year of working with dialogue journals, teachers often find themselves in these kinds of situations.

- You have tried dialogue journals for several months in your own classroom, and both you and your students enjoy using them. An administrator overhears you talking about dialogue journals and wants to know how the practice fits in with the school's language arts philosophy. She suggests that you write up a description for the faculty newsletter. How do you explain the concepts underlying this kind of communication? Where can you learn more?

- A parent asks you whether dialogue journals are a research-based approach to learning, or just another educational fad. You want to explain that the journals are soundly based in language learning theories.

- During Christmas vacation you take time to read through all the journals of your students from the beginning of the school year. You begin to see changes

in the ways students seem to be thinking and using language to express their ideas. Those changes were not apparent while you were working on the journals every day. You want to understand what is happening, and why.

Dialogue journals were developed by practicing teachers for use with children in their classes, and not as part of any research project. Educational researchers, however, have studied the nature and outcomes of dialogue journal use with both hearing and deaf students. Those studies provide ample justification for starting and continuing the process, as well as guidance in ways dialogue journals can be used to complement instructional activities.

The dialogue journal process is a good example of whole-language learning, a comprehensive philosphy of language, reading, and writing. That set of educational theories is also referred to as the "developmental approach" or the natural language learning approach to literacy. These different terms have a common basis in the conviction that language is acquired through active participation in its use for social interaction, and that language competence begins with an understanding and mastery of the whole communicative process before specific parts and discrete skills are learned.

Studies of Dialogue Journal Use with Hearing and Deaf Students

Educational research on the nature of language, language acquisition, and cognitive development provides solid support for the use of dialogue journals. Three major studies of dialogue journal use have been conducted since 1979. They are summarized below.

1. Dialogue Journal Writing as a Communicative Event

This first study of dialogue journals, funded by the National Institute of Education (NIE), was conducted in a regular sixth-grade classroom in California. The teacher, Leslee Reed, had been using dialogue journals with her students for about 20 years. The study focused on the nature of the dialogue journal as communication.

forming a developmental link between face-to-face conversation (at which students already are competent) and classroom writing tasks.

The study identified the essential character of the writing as *functional, interactive*, and dealing with *self-generated topics*. Dialogue journals were found to promote an increase in the appropriate use of various language functions, and of elaboration and specificity in writing. The study also found that the success of the dialogue journal is highly dependent on the teacher's direct participation and interest. It requires that teachers use all of their skills, knowledge, and values in teaching and assisting students (Staton, Shuy, Peyton, and Reed, in press).

2. Dialogue Writing: Analysis of Student-Teacher Interactive Writing in the Learning of English as a Second Language

A second NIE-funded study of dialogue journal use, completed in 1984, dealt with bilingual students learning English for the first time. That study focused on the process of language acquisition through dialogue journals at both grammatical and discourse levels.

The analysis provided evidence that student acquisition of written language proceeds in much the same manner as it does in speech, following the same general order for learning of grammatical forms (past tense - *ed* endings, - *ing* verbs, and so on). That sequence is the same as that observed by Brown (1973) in first language acquisition of young children. The NIE study demonstrated that second language learners continue to master the written language even when their writing in the dialogue journals is not corrected (Kreeft, Shuy, Staton, Reed, Morroy, 1984).

3. Report of the Gallaudet Dialogue Journal Project

At Gallaudet College, the Dialogue Journal Project documented the adaptation of dialogue journals for use with deaf students at all age levels—kindergarten through college—and the conditions that affect its successful implementation. Dialogue journal texts from

primary, secondary, and college levels were photocopied and analyzed, with student and teacher permission. Dialogue journals were found effective at all of these levels, meeting a wide variety of needs for teachers and students. Many conclusions of that research are incorporated in Chapter V of this handbook.

Specific studies included patterns of topic development and continuation in relation to teacher strategies, use of dialogue journals to improve and assess reading comprehension, effects on both student and teacher attitudes and on student motivation, linguistic changes over time, and the acquisition of written literacy by primary-age deaf students (Staton, 1985).

One important conclusion shared by all three studies is that the dialogue journal process has two essential components: **the interactive written conversation in permanent form**, and the **mind and language of a committed, interested teacher**. All the studies demonstrate that dialogue journals do not work automatically for all teachers, nor in all teaching situations. Participating teachers must be committed to the extra effort involved in the project and willing to be open and honest in their communication with students.

Successful dialogue journals also require *time*: time for students to become involved and to write without pressure, and time for teachers to respond comfortably. Research shows that if the teacher is not committed to or interested in the project, or if too little time is allotted to working on the journals, simply having students write every day is not likely to be effective in developing communicative competence. Nor will the process be enjoyable for students or teachers.

Related Research and Theory Supporting Dialogue Journal Use

In addition to the studies focused specifically on dialogue journal use, the process is supported by research and educational theory in four distinct areas:

- The nature of language as purposeful social action.
- The process of language acquisition.
- The natural acquisition of reading and writing skills through their use in a social context.
- The contribution of purposeful dialogues with adults to the growth of children's minds.

Language as Purposeful Social Action in Context

In its natural form, language is an interactive, functional communication process. In education, there is sometimes a tendency to forget that fact and to think of language only as a set of linguistic symbols. This is particularly true with written language, which is both visible and permanent. Since written language is tangible, it is tempting to define writing simply as the use of symbols for letters forming words and sentences, and to expect children to learn written language by copying what they see. Any written language, however, is an arbitrary set of symbols. One good metaphor for language is the image of an iceberg, in which the meaning of what is being communicated is neither visible nor audible, but exists below the surface.

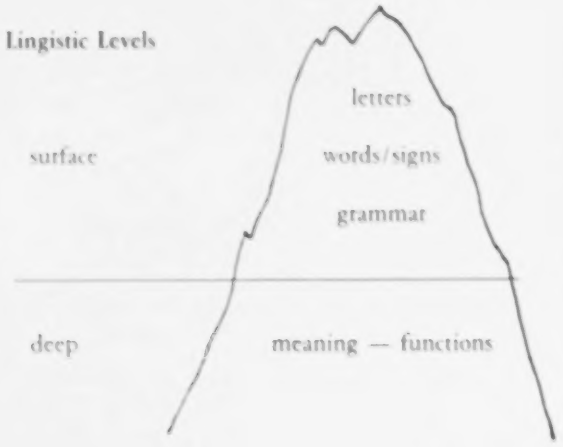


Figure A: A deep to surface representation of language use (after Shuy, 1981).

Words or signs, composed of sounds or gestures, are meaningful because they are embedded in a complex context of social interactions and physical settings. At the bottom of the iceberg, not visible but clearly understood by participants who share the human social context, is the meaning of the words that are uttered or written. Words are not simple pictures of reality, but meaningful symbols of relationships among objects and experiences.

In order to use a language competently for thought and communication, a learner must be actively involved in its functional uses (Shuy, 1981). Competence in using a language, therefore, involves much more than knowing a lot of words. It requires an ability to use the language appropriately and effectively to get things done in the language community—to inform, persuade, request information, apologize, complain, and so on. These are usually called language functions. They involve learning how to introduce and maintain a topic in conversation, to take turns, and to manage such complex forms of speech as telling stories, making an argument, giving a report.

Linguists refer to this broad mastery of language as communicative competence (Hymes, 1974; Shuy, 1981) to distinguish it from simple linguistic competence, or mastery of correct vocabulary and usage. Communicative competence can be acquired only by direct participation in practical uses of the language, which then give meaning to mastery of the linguistic code and its forms. Knowledge of language forms, then, is not mastery of the language, and does not lead to communicative competence without broad participation in language as meaningful action.

The Process of Language Acquisition

There is a dramatic contrast between the natural process of language acquisition and the approach usually taken in schools. The iceberg model demonstrates that children learn language from the bottom up, finding meaning in their lives before they know the symbols for it, and understanding the language used around them

long before they can produce it. Only gradually do children master the correct forms for the language they use every day.

While educators accept this process as natural for both oral and signed language, schools tend to teach reading and writing from the top down—from form to meaning. Language instruction typically begins with the sounds of letters or words, and then moves on to grammar and sentence construction, before getting to basic communication through meaningful discourse. In the school medium, few children have a chance to participate in reading or writing as a natural form of communication, without pressure to produce full-fledged messages correctly.

Roger Shuy, a linguist who has been much concerned with reading and writing acquisition, points out that writing in particular is taught in a way that directly opposes the natural development of oral or sign language. Oral language mastery begins with intimate, informal conversations in which learners do not have to say more

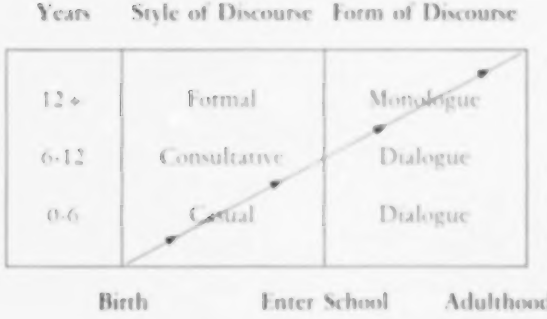


Figure B: The Development Sequence of Oral Language Styles

than they wish at any given time. In the classroom, a more businesslike or professional style of communication, termed consultative, is used between teacher and student, but the language format is still dialogue. Only after many years of immersion in dialogue are students expected to be able to speak in formal, unassisted monologues (Shuy, in press).

The teaching of writing, on the other hand, follows quite a different developmental sequence. Most curricula for teaching children to write seem to be based on a view of writing as formal, adult-level communication in monologue form, which must be practiced without concern for meaning. This is precisely the opposite of oral language mastery.

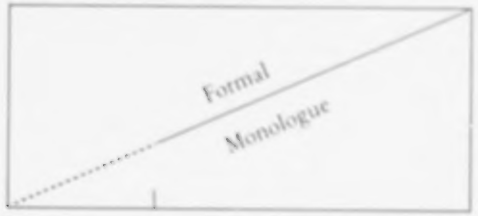


Figure C: The Development Sequence of Written Language Style

Shuy comments that initial instruction and experience in writing requires students to begin writing at the formal level without having passed through the casual and consultative stages which serve to prepare them for the monologuing ability to communicate with an unspecified and non-responsive audience through the written word. One major value of dialogue journals for all children, but particularly for deaf children, is that they are based on the familiar dialogue form. They provide a writing task in which children can participate actively and competently from the very beginning, with no need to master adult-style monologue forms of writing.

Even children who are very young, deaf, and language limited can participate effectively in these interactive written conversations, because the dialogues contain two primary ingredients that are part of all successful human communication. They are purposeful interactions about important topics in a shared context; and they include an interested, committed, competent user of language who can sustain the context for communication. Dialogue journals are effective because they create in writing the same kinds of functional, interactive conversation that occur in first-language learning.

Research on the dialogue journals of deaf students and others for whom English is a second language demonstrates that these written dialogues have many of the same conversational features as parent-child conversations, or the interactions between native and non-native speakers that lead to second-language acquisition (Staton, 1984c). In other words, an effective written dialogue about topics generated by the student can provide natural conditions for helping the student acquire competence in both reading and writing more quickly, thus decreasing the time spent in directed instruction. The conditions for optimal language learning include:

- Interesting, relevant, comprehensible language input is provided for the learner to read.
- Grammatical structures emerge in the course of the interaction and in response to the learner's particular language abilities.
- Opportunities are provided for clarification and additional information on a given topic.
- The focus is on meaning and communication, not on correctness of language form.
- The learner is not on the defensive; the interaction occurs in a private, non-threatening, supportive medium in which "failure" is neither noted nor punished.

The Natural Process of Learning to Read and Write

A number of researchers have studied the ways in which young children begin to use written language. Instead of looking at what children do under teacher-directed

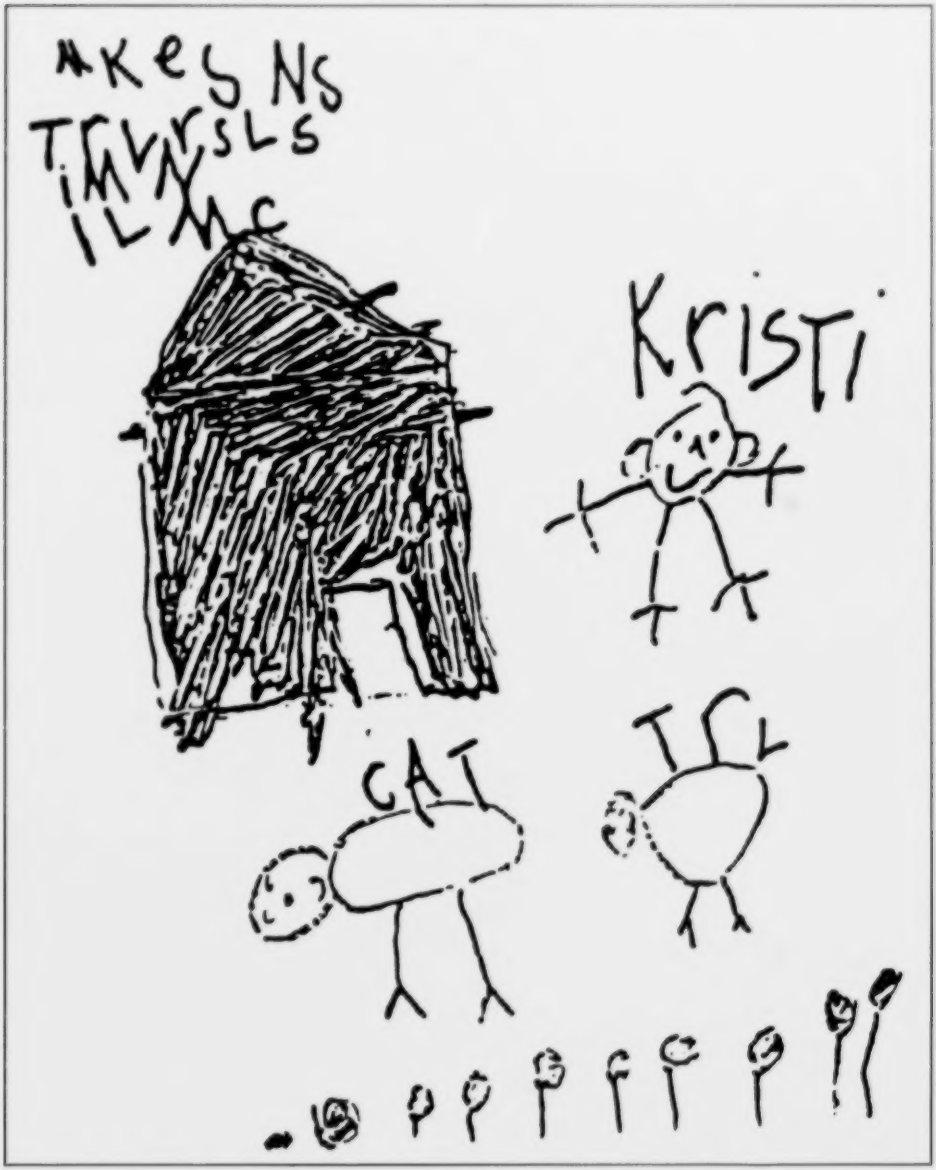
conditions, researchers have begun investigating the techniques children use to communicate in written form before they learn how to write (Harste, Burke, and Woodward, 1984). Those studies further support the use of dialogue journals with deaf students as a natural means of developing their communicative competence in written English.

Harste and his colleagues found that children do not just scribble or draw meaningless pictures, although it may appear so to an outsider. A young child's first attempts at written communication are highly informative, once one knows how to read the message from the child's point of view. The example on page 103 illustrates how informative and meaningful such written messages can be.

Harste's work provides evidence that even three-year-old children are engaged in the same literacy processes that adults use, if at a lesser level of mastery. Recent research with preschool deaf children has shows that deaf children use the same strategies and approaches to create meaning when they are asked to write before they know how (Ewoldt, 1985). Early dialogue journal entries by young deaf children demonstrate the same kinds of communicative intent found by Harste and his collegues.

The research on how writing emerges from early drawings should encourage teachers not to worry if their students initially draw instead of using written English. The appropriate response is to assume that the child means something by each drawing. The teacher may want to provide a written translation where that is possible, adding written symbols to represent the meanings of the drawings. Just as young children learning a first language find every utterance or gesture treated as a meaningful comment, they should also be assured that their drawings can be read and replied to in terms of their communicative intent.

One of the principles of linguistics is that in a dialogue, the two participants will adapt to each other's language, imitating each other's intonations and vocabulary, and becoming more and more accommodat-



Translated from the child's writing, this message reads, "My cat is nice. Turtles are slow. I am nice. I like my cat."

ing and synchronous. This fairly universal tendency works to ensure that a deaf child engaged in a written dialogue over time is going to write more and more like the teacher, using a larger vocabulary and more correct grammatical forms in order to represent the message accurately. Teachers do not need to fear that children who are allowed to draw in the beginning will become dependent on drawings for communication, as long as they are receiving written responses in turn.

Reading research demonstrates that reading is an active process, in which the reader is constantly making decisions based on prior experience, knowledge of the language, and context cues: pictures, events, etc. (Anderson, 1977; Hammermeister and Israelite, 1983). The sole function of reading is to construct meaning. Such educators as Smith (1983) and Goodman and Goodman (1972) point out that learning to read is natural when the child is provided with meaningful language.

Similar research finds that children learn to read easily through the act of reading. They begin with the many printed messages in their environment—in books, on television, on cereal boxes, and elsewhere. Children learn to read by reading, again in situations where the symbols have obvious meaning to them, or can at least be explained by handy adults.

When a student and a teacher write to each other in their dialogue journal, they construct a reading text that is continuously adapted to that student's particular language level, and that deals with the topics that interest the student. As the student acquires more competence with written language, the teacher (often without being aware of it) tends to increase the complexity of responses, providing an increasingly challenging reading task.

Dialogue as a Crucible for the Growth of Mind

Recent studies of cognitive development show that the nature and quality of the interactions in which students are engaged have a direct impact on their thinking capacity. Dialogue creates direct mental engagement. In a

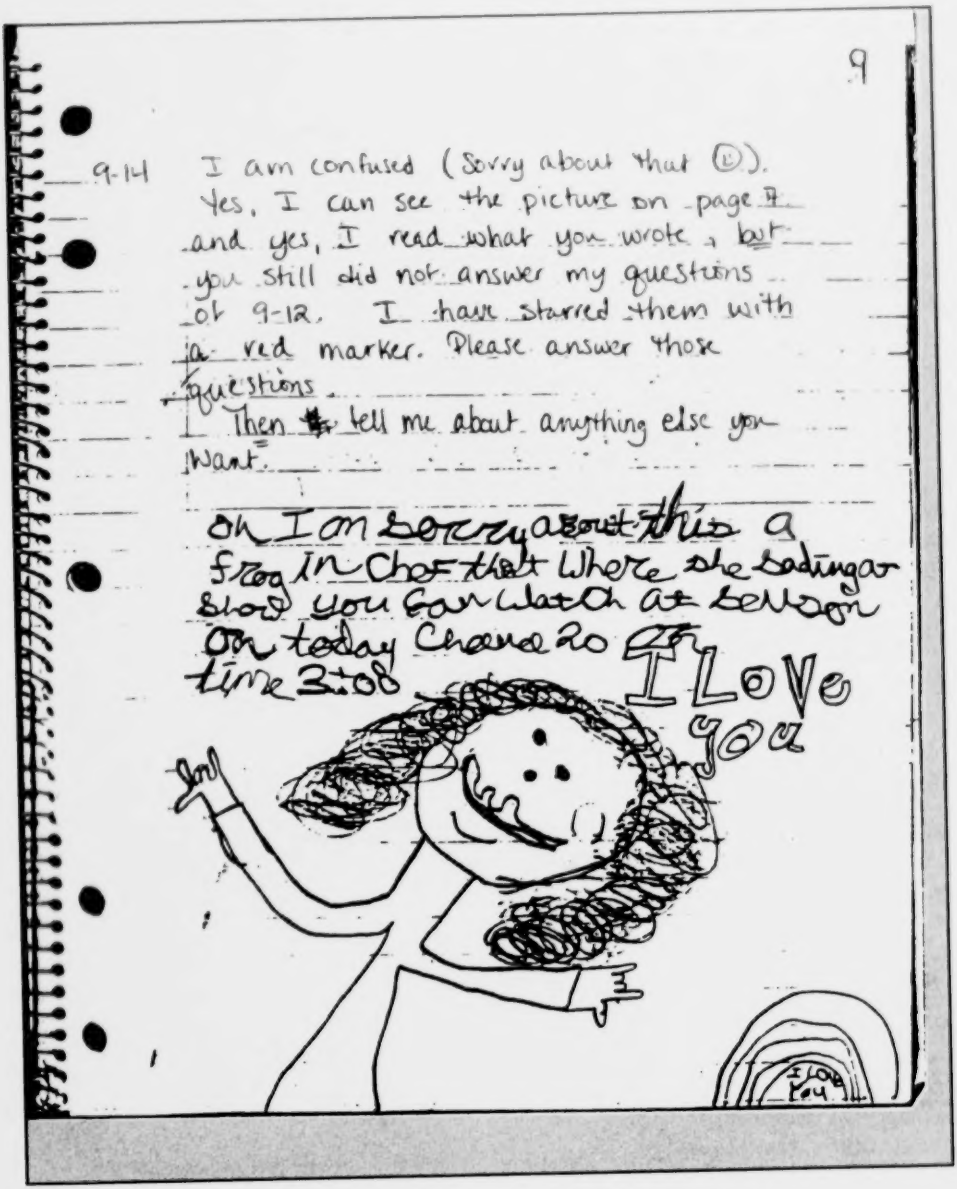
dialogue, each person takes up statements that have gone before and develops them further. After extended interaction, the participants eventually internalize the advanced quality of thinking that began as a joint effort (Bruner, 1966; Parker, 1983).

Research on classroom teaching has found that in the act of dealing with students, the teacher's way of thinking becomes a model for the students to observe and internalize (Staton, 1984b). For that transition to take place, however, students must be actively engaged in conversations with the teacher, participating in shared thinking about the same topics or problems. Jerome Bruner describes this process very effectively.

> . . . what the teacher must be, to be an effective competence model, is a day-to-day working model with whom to react. It is not so much that the teacher provides a model to imitate. Rather, it is that the teacher can become a part of the student's internal dialogue—somebody whose respect [one] wants, somebody whose standards [one] wants to make [one's] own. It is like becoming a speaker of a language one shares with somebody. The language of that interaction becomes a part of oneself, and the standards of style and clarity that one adopts for that interaction become a part of one's own standards (Bruner, 1966, page 123).

Learning to think is like learning a language, and thinking ability is acquired in a variety of ways, rather than just being explicitly taught. Intentional, thoughtful interactions with someone who can provide an effective competence model of how to think about important topics is of crucial importance for all children.

A Word about Questions. Many teachers have a problem at first with this kind of natural "thinking together" conversation. They find few visible signs that students are really engaged in thinking. Most teachers have been taught that the way to stimulate thinking is to ask students a lot of questions. Many teachers, therefore, begin asking lots of questions in the journals, and find that students often ignore them.


9
9-14 I am confused (Sorry about that ☺).
Yes, I can see the picture on page 7
and yes, I read what you wrote, but
you still did not answer my questions
of 9-12. I have starred them with
a red marker. Please answer those
questions.
Then tell me about anything else you
want.
oh I am sorry about this a
frog in Chat that where she Sadinga
Stod you Can Watch at Nelson
On today Chanel 20 at
time 3:08
I Love
you
I love you

Admitting you don't understand something often works better than specific questions.

Research indicates that students have good reason for that resistance. Teachers use questions as a primary means of establishing and maintaining power in the classroom; by asking questions, teachers assert their right to dominate. Researchers who observe classroom interactions call these "control questions" (Goody, 1978; Peyton, in press; White, 1985). In dialogue journals, there is no need to struggle for control, and questions posed only to make the student think may be perceived as control strategies.

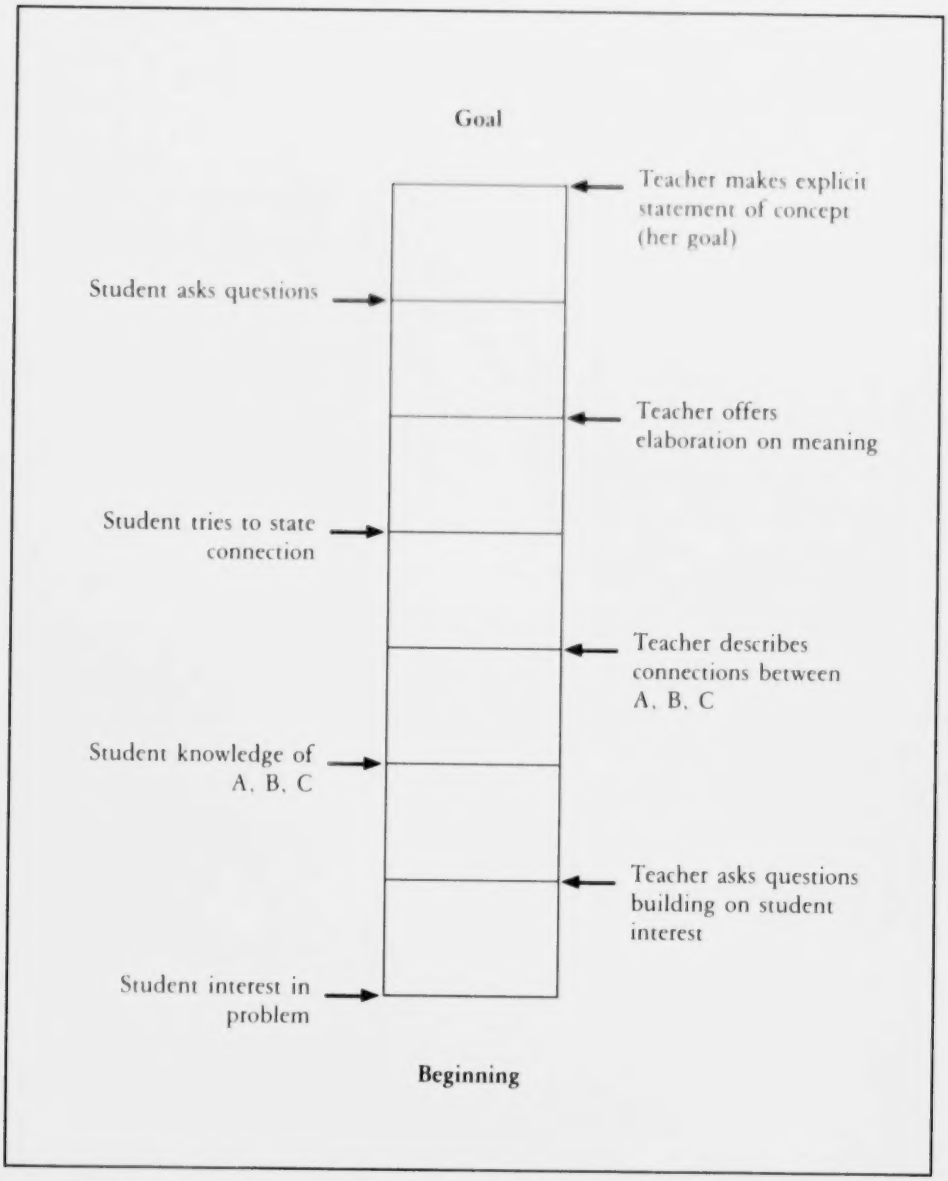
Additional classroom research shows that teacher questions seldom encourage students to engage in genuine thinking. One educational psychologist who has been studying the nature and effects of classroom questions finds that the typical teacher interrogations used in classrooms create dependency and discourage original thinking. Dillon (1983) suggests that teachers use questions only when they are genuinely perplexed, and do so only as genuine participants with students in a mutual inquiry process.

Teachers usually find that excessive questioning in dialogue journals elicits little response from students. It can also lead to a kind of passive relationship in which the teacher does all the thinking and the student coasts along on short answers—exactly the opposite of what is hoped for.

Dillon suggests a number of alternate strategies for encouraging mutual discussion in which students do the thinking. Teachers might:

- Elaborate on an interesting point.
- Give personal information for comparison or illustration.
- Openly admit their own perplexity.

Openly admitting that you don't understand something in the dialogue; for instance writing something like "I am really stumped! I can't figure out what you meant by .... in your last entry. Could you explain it again?" gives the student an honest, direct request for information. That kind of approach usually works much better than specific questions.


Goal
Teacher makes explicit statement of concept (her goal)
Student asks questions
Teacher offers elaboration on meaning
Student tries to state connection
Teacher describes connections between A, B, C
Student knowledge of A, B, C
Teacher asks questions building on student interest
Student interest in problem
Beginning

Teacher and student build a conversational "ladder" for constructing meaning.

Setting up the Scaffolding. The process of thinking-together in cooperation, which occurs in dialogue journals and in face-to-face conversations, is described by a number of educators in this country as "interactional scaffolding" (Cazden, 1981; Greenfield, 1984; Wertsch, 1981; Wood, Bruner, Ross, 1976). Dialogue about a shared goal or problem tends to form a special pattern in which each party's statement builds on what has already been said. The conversation eventually takes the form of a scaffold or ladder with rungs for climbing, constructed by the student and teacher working together.

Children learn to master hundreds of everyday activities by participating in them along with others who are more experienced. The learner begins with only a goal or intention, and gradually acquires or develops strategies to accomplish that goal. The learned concept, skill, or behavior occurs first as part of the joint interpersonal effort of two or more people working together. Gradually, however, the learner incorporates the specific steps in the activity and can accomplish the task unassisted.

The role of the adult in all this is to provide "scaffolding" for the learner. In dialogue journals, the student builds on and uses the adult's actual thinking processes to reach a goal or solve a problem. Far from making the task simpler, the teacher helps the child understand its complexity, then accomplish the task of communicating a complicated thought or idea through collaborative effort.

Thus when the teacher lets the scaffold of cooperative tasks and verbal support drop away, the child understands what it means to communicate ideas and feelings effectively in written language. Students do not just acquire unconnected skills with no idea of how or why to use them; they have learned how to use those skills to accomplish difficult tasks on their own (page 108).

Eventually, by internalizing the teacher's language strategies, the student can take over much of the process of thinking through an event, describing what happened, looking for a general pattern or making a comparison, and deciding what the experience means.

The teacher's reasoning techniques are internalized as part of the student's own thinking processes (Staton, 1984).

The metaphor of scaffolding provides a very accurate description of how human languages are learned and how cognitive development proceeds. Mutual conversation, in which the learner's goal of telling a story, finding out why something has happened, or trying to explain an idea or feeling, is initially carried on with much support from the adult. The adult may elaborate, ask questions, offer more information, or reinterpret the student's contributions to demonstrate how one goes about this activity in the particular language. Gradually, the student will be able to demonstrate assimilation of those skills and strategies.

Rather than asking a student to accomplish all this in one sitting, to capture compex thought processes on paper in what may be a second language, the dialogue journal allows the student to do as much as is comfortable in one sitting, then continue the exploration in subsequent entries. Meanwhile the student is helped by the teacher's response, which may add new ideas, suggest a label for an experience, offer a comparison, or clarify the connection between a specific event and a general underlying concern or idea (Kreeft, 1983).

The following example illustrates how an 11-year-old deaf student and his teacher together constructed an interesting essay on growing up. Readers can see the coherence of the student's thinking, aided by teacher elaboration and questions.

Teacher's Entries: *Why did you change your name to Bob? Did your mother tell you or did your uncle tell you?*

Bob's Entries: *Yes is my decision is change My name is Bob.*

T: *I thought maybe your mother, grandmother, or uncle helped you decide to change your name. I will have to practice Bob now. Sometimes I forget and say Robbie.*

B: *Yes is my name Bob. But nomore Robbie Because Robbie look alike little boy. But don't call my name Robbie no more. Ms. Luft is your name is Pamie when you little girl?*

T: *I will try to remember to call you Bob. Sometimes I forget. I am used to Robbie from before. I agree that you are growing up now. My mother called me Pammie when I was little. Then people called me Pam. Sometimes my mother likes Pamela, my full name, but that seems very long to me.*

B: *Yes I am growing and I was tall and my name is Bob.*

T: *You are taller now and more mature. What do you want to do when you get bigger?*

B: *I will be bigger and I work. I will be work at Kendall School office.*

T: *That is a wonderful idea to work in Kendall School's office. Which job do you want to have? Do you want to be a principal like Janice, assistant principal like Al Couthen, boss of the busses like Dawna Ellis, or do you want another job?*

B: *I work people are punish. My job is people is.*

T: *Wow! You want to punish people. Will you be strict? Will you be easy? What punishments will you decide on?*

B: *People have to write a 500 time, or 100,00,00 time, or 900 or 900,000,000 or 800.00.00 or 700,00,00 or better behavior at school, or don't fight in the bus.*

T: *I think you will be strict with the students. Maybe the students will become bored. Maybe the students will be mad at you because they have to write 900,000,000 times. What will you do if students are mad at you and have a lousy attitude?*

B: *Have good attube and frinds.*

T: *Sometimes students don't have a good attitude with Al Couthen. Sometimes students don't want to go to Al Couthen's office. Sometimes students are not friendly and nice to Al Couthen.*

B: *You are right Ms Luft That what I want.*

T: *Are you finished talking about your job when you grow up? Maybe you want to tell me about your vacation. I'll bet you had fun.*

B: *Yes Dear Ms Luft Yes I finished talk aoubt my job.*

David Olson comments that "Much of the knowledge most worth having—making discoveries, speaking convincingly, writing effectively—cannot be taught explicitly." The rules for thinking, writing, speaking, in fact for most major human activities, are not known. Olson goes on to point out that those important life skills are best acquired through interaction with competent members of the culture, who provide demonstrations and opportunities for repeated practice, accompanied by appropriate feedback (Olson, 1976).

Learning to think and mastering any language are profoundly human activities. Both are learned best and most easily when learners have ample opportunity to interact in mutually meaningful collaboration with others who know how to do them well. Dialogue journals offer a very practical, simple way for teachers to encourage their deaf students to think and communicate in written English.

This overview of the research, developmental theories, and philosophy that underlie the classroom practice of dialogue journal writing is intended to help teachers explain how dialogue journals fit into their teaching, and to understand the different kinds of growth that can be fostered by this kind of interaction.

Appendix A

Procedures for Consent

A dialogue journal is a private, written conversation between two people. Unlike regular classroom assignments that may be collected and used by the school for research or other purposes, a journal belongs only to the people who participate in its writing. At the end of each school year, teachers and students usually spend time reading through their journals and talking together about the changes they can trace, in themselves and in their writing. Then the journals are sent home with their student owners.

Dialogue journals are such effective tools for communication and teaching that many teachers are eager to share parts of them with colleagues and educational researchers. But because they are private possessions, important legal and ethical considerations are involved in their use. Written permission must be obtained from everyone involved in a journal before any part of it may be reproduced, quoted, or replicated for use of anyone other than its authors. Teachers often make copies of their students' journals before the students take them home, but the possession of such copies does not constitute permission for the teacher to publish or share them.

At Gallaudet, the dialogue journal project was instituted specifically to permit research into their effectiveness with deaf and hearing impaired students, and with the aim of publishing instructional guidelines. The following procedures were used to obtain consent to use selected excerpts from student journals for educational research, for training of teachers, and in the publication of this book.

1. Permission to photocopy selected journal pages was requested separately from both students and their parents. It was specified that no student would be identified, nor would personal and family information be revealed that was not directly relevant to understanding of the text.

2. Consent from students was requested at the end of the school year, rather than at the beginning of the dialogue journal project. It was considered important to ask consent only after students were familiar with the meaning of dialogue journals and the content of their own journal writing.

3. All of the teachers involved were also asked for their consent. Many have participated in and contributed to the analyses of their own students' journals, as well as to the writing of this handbook. Especially among older students, dialogue journals often contain discussions of very private matters. At Kendall and MSSD, a number of students and teachers chose not to make the content of such discussions public, or even to submit them as part of a research data base. This was not typical, but in every case, the students and teachers were genuinely free to decide whether their materials would be available to researchers or not.

Those procedures ensured that all interested individuals understood fully the reasons and purposes for use of dialogue journal writing in workshops, research, and teacher instruction. When any student, teacher, or parent was uncomfortable with sharing dialogue journal materials, for any reason, those wishes were respected. No one was pressured in any way to cooperate with the project.

On the next several pages are samples of the kinds of letters and forms used to obtain permission from students, parents, and teachers in the Gallaudet Pre-College Programs. As you will see, different formats were used for each of the three groups, providing the needed information as clearly as possible. Other programs deciding to institute instructional programs, workshops, or other uses of dialogue journals are welcome to adapt these documents for their own use.

PARENT PERMISSION LETTER

Dear Parents,
As you know, this year the children at

_____ School

have been communicating with us in a special way, through dialogue journals. Dialogue journals are private books between students and teachers. We find that this is an excellent way for students and teachers to share their thoughts and ideas; it is also a good way to model English reading and writing.

Because members of your child's class are among the first elementary-aged hearing impaired children to use dialogue journals, it has been a learning experience for everyone involved. We have seen many positive results from the use of dialogue journals. We also feel that it would be beneficial for other teachers to learn more about this method of teaching and communicating with their own deaf students. As a means to accomplish this, we are planning to conduct workshops and write articles on the project.

We are asking your permission to make photocopies of pages from your child's book, to be used in teaching others about dialogue journals. We have already asked for and received permission from your child. We guarantee that the writing will remain anonymous; your child's name will never be used in any way.

Please fill out and return the attached form by (date). We hope that you will grant your approval.

Thanks so much,

PARENT PERMISSION FORM

_____ I hereby give my permission for the

_____ School
to make photocopies of my child's dialogue journal. I understand that the copies will be used for teaching other professionals about dialogue journal use with hearing impaired students. I also understand that my child's name will be removed from the photocopies and that she or he will not be identified at any time.

_____ I do not give my permission.

Child's Name _____

Date _____

Parent's Signature _____

STUDENT PERMISSION FORM

_____ I hereby give permission for my school to make a copy of my dialogue journal. I understand that the copy will be used to show other teachers how to use dialogue journals.

My name will never be used either in print or through the air.

_____ I do not give permission.

Signature _____

Date _____

HIGH SCHOOL PERMISSION FORM

I understand that pages from my dialogue journal may be selected for use in research and instruction, by the administration of my school. Researchers will study whether these journals help students learn more about use of written English and communicate more easily with their teachers.

I also understand that I will not be identified as owner of the journal, my name will not be used in any way, and that personal information from the journal will not be made public.

I am willing to allow pages from my dialogue journal to be photocopied for use in this project before the journal is returned to me.

Signature _____

Date _____

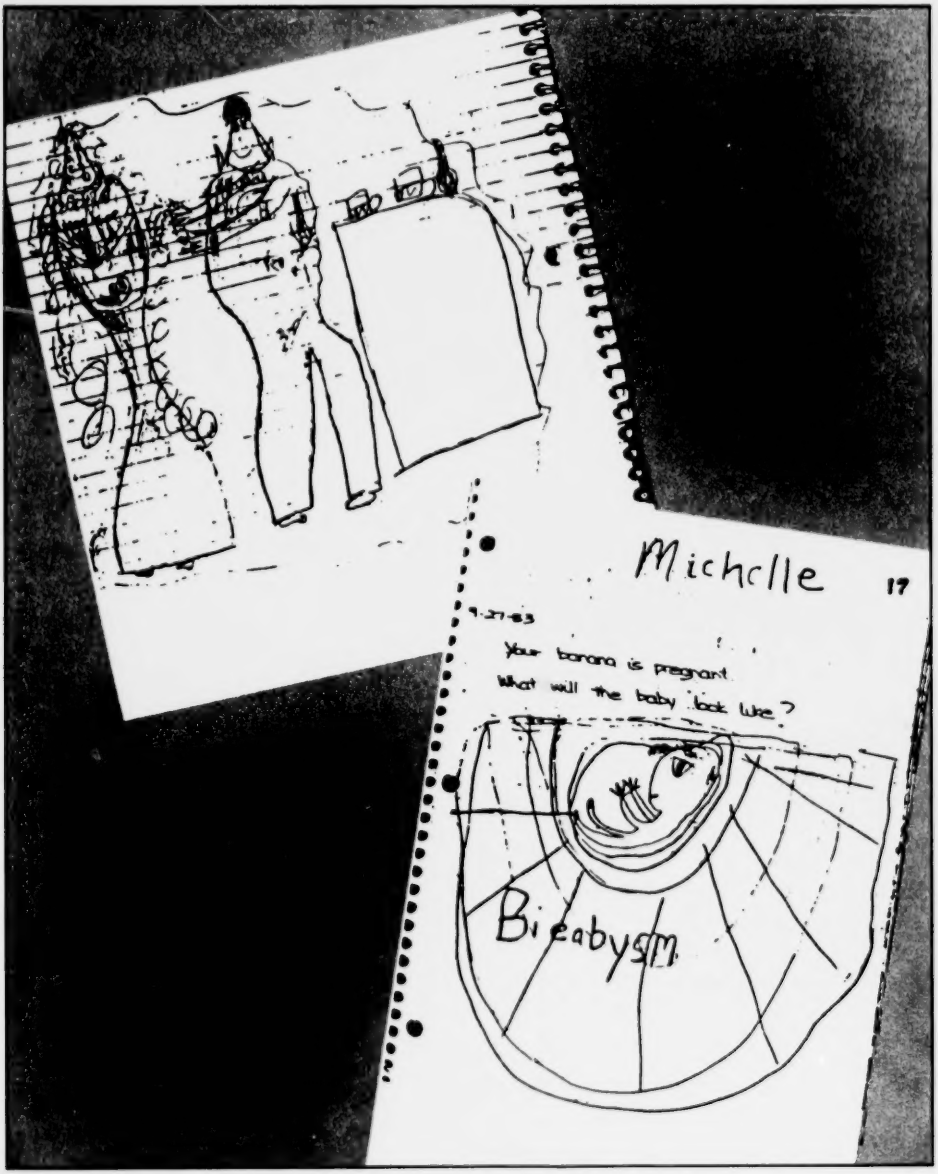
Appendix B

What is a dialogue really like?

This book includes many brief examples taken from the dialogue journals of students at the Kendall Demonstration Elementary School and the Model Secondary School for the Deaf. Unfortunately, a selection of one or two exchanges in isolation cannot accurately represent the experience of using dialogue journals. In fact, short excerpts, as interesting as they are, may be misleading to the extent that they focus attention on single comments and responses.

The real dialogue journals are quite different. Each entry is no more than one sentence in a long conversation. The meaning of what each person is saying is constructed only gradually, over pages and pages of dialogue. The single-entry examples we have selected for this handbook are often very entertaining or powerful to read, but they most often occur at the end of a long series of seemingly casual exchanges on one topic, or after several different topics have been tried and dropped.

This section offers you an opportunity to read through and participate vicariously in several more realistic, sustained dialogues. These four longer selections provide a sense of the natural flow of written conversation. You will see how a topic can be sustained for several days or more than a week, and how other topics often will just trickle out because one party is no longer interested.



(top) Michelle tells her teacher about a friend's new baby.
(bottom) "My banana is pregnant" was Michelle's signed explanation of this drawing.

You may begin to feel the friendly curiosity each party feels about what the other will write next.

None of the four dialogues is predictable or contrived. Neither instructors not students were aware, as they wrote to each other, that some day another audience might be interested in their discussions.

Example 1: Michelle, a young primary student, tells her teacher about a friend's baby.

9-27
Teacher: *Your banana is pregnant. What will the baby look like?*

9-28
T: *The banana is inside the mother. When will the baby be born?*

Student: *finish. born*

9-29
T: *Your mother's friend had a baby born. Was the baby a boy or a girl?*

(Student underlines the word *girl.*)

9-30
T: *Your mother's friend's name is Jean. Jean has a baby girl. How did I know your mother's friend's name?*

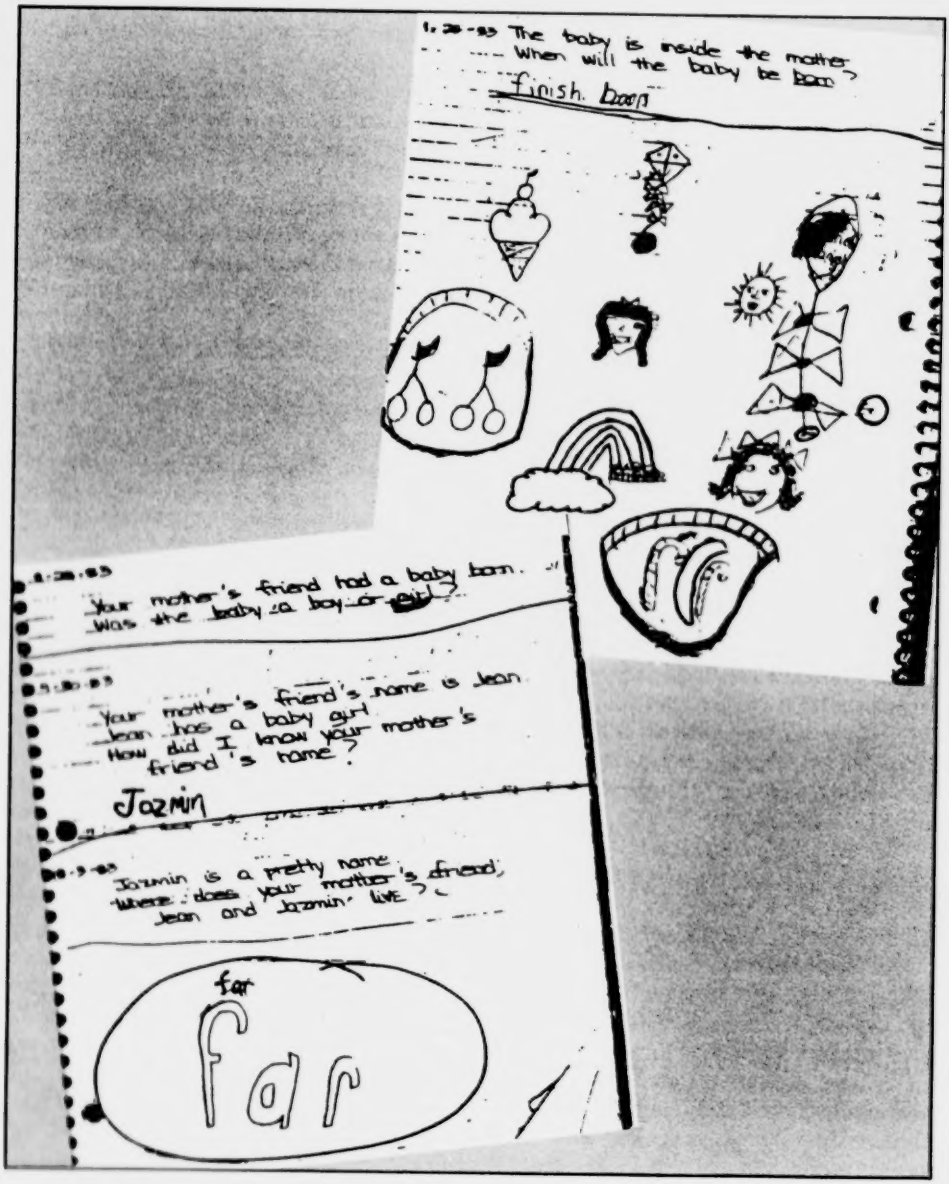
S: *Jazmin*

10-3
T: *Jazmin is a pretty name. Where does your mother's friend Jean and Jazmin live?*

S: *far far*

Example 2: Seven-year-old Amy negotiates a visit to her teacher's house.

2-15
S: *Can I go to Susan home with you on Feb 20 and*


The baby is inside the mother
When will the baby be born?
finish. born
Your mother's friend had a baby born.
Was the baby a boy or girl?
Your mother's friend's name is Jean
Jean has a baby girl
How did I know your mother's
friend's name?
Jazmin
Jazmin is a pretty name
Where does your mother's friend
Jean and Jazmin live?
far
far

She provides information and answers questions.

write to my Dad and Mom. Let konw that Amy and Michelle go to Susan's home OK. Love, Amy

T: *Sorry, you can't sleep at my house on February 20. We will have no school on that day. I prefer that you sleep at my house on a Thursday, maybe in March.*

2-16

S: *No I want to go to your house on Feb 19. Love from Susan Amy Michelle.*

T: *You didn't understand me. Read my message again please.*

2-17

S: *I konw*
I want to go to your house beausce I late see your cat and dog. Love, Amy

T: *You can come to my house in March. You can choose any Thursday in March except for March 1 and 8.*

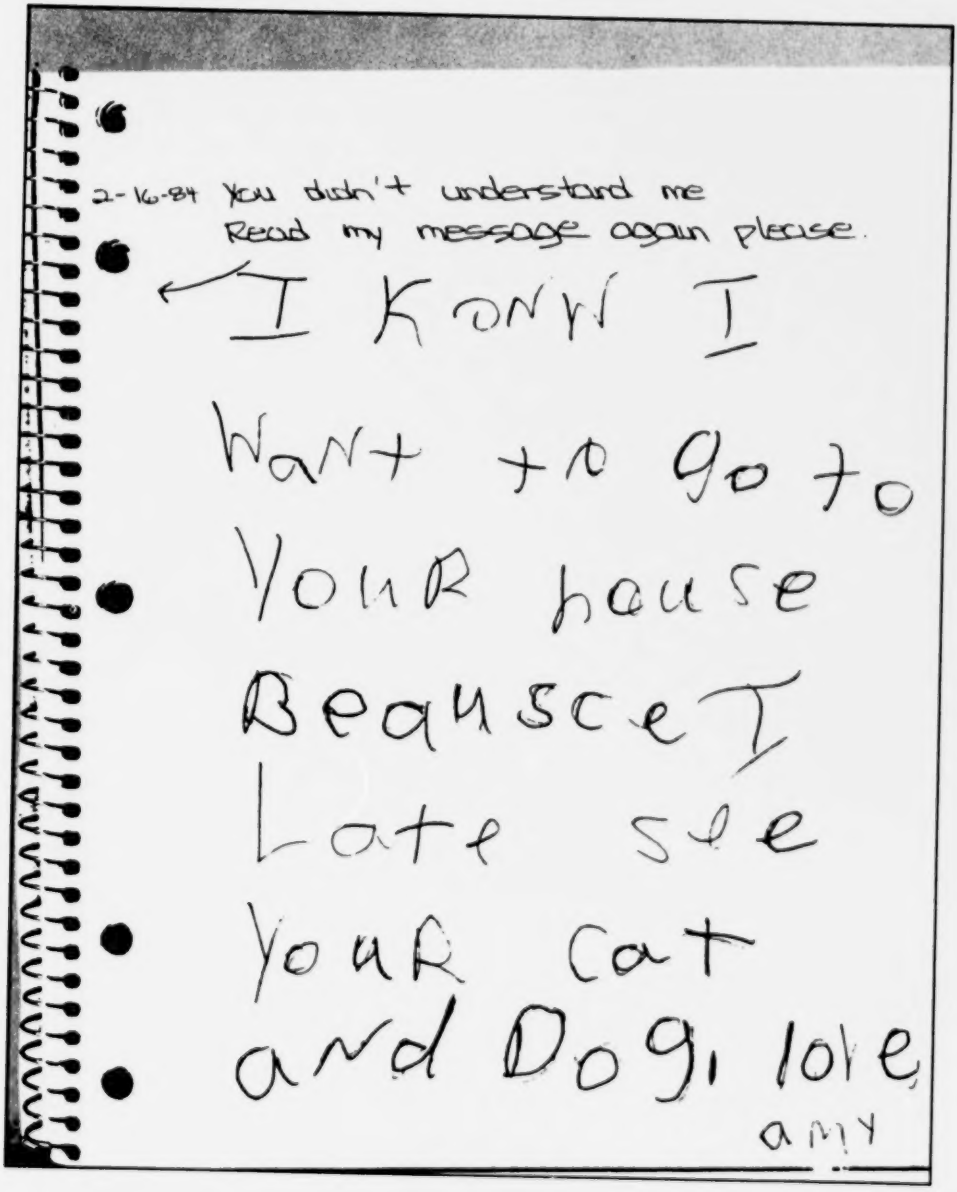
S: *OK I will go to Susan's home on March 1 and 8. I will Beausce Michelle come on Feb the my thur go to Susan's home then I now konw that will be thur in your class. I not go to Kerry's home when I am 6 years old and 7 years old. Susan like my good story Love Amy*

T: *I said you can't come on March 1 and March 8 but you can on the other Thursdays. Try again and pick another date.*

2-23

S: *OK I will see Susan on March 1 and March 8 and I will see your cat and big dog at your home and I will see my Barbie's pool and pritty Barbie drss and play with Susan at your home. OK can I play with Susan. Love Amy*

T: *You did not read me carefully. I said you can NOT sleep at my house on March 8. Try again with another date. Remember it has to be a Thursday.*



This is one page of Amy's dialogue with her teacher. The rest of the journal did not reproduce well.

2-24
S: *OH I will sleep on your house.*

T: *Pick a date!*

2-27
S: *March 22*

T: *March 22 is fine with me! I will tell my husband about it. You will need to get your parents' permission. What do you think they will say?*

3-1
S: *Oh I not side March 22. I want sleep on March 2 only!*

T: *March 2 is not a Thursday! So, how about March 22?*

3-5
S: *OK You must OK 22? YES or NO?*

T: *Yes! Please ask your parents if you can stay at my home.*

3-9
S: *OK I will tell my mom and dad side yes or no.*

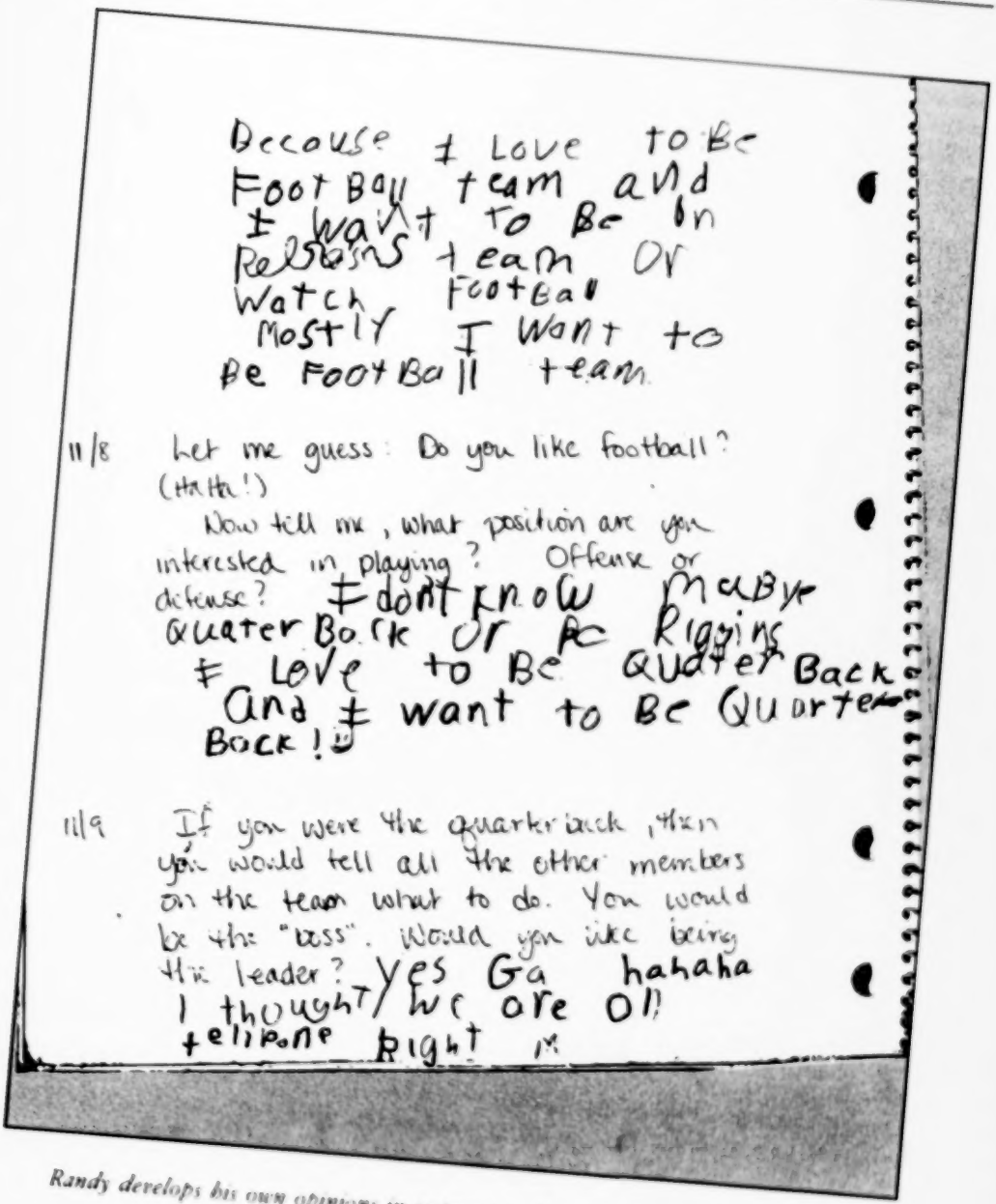
T: *What did your parents say?*

3-10
S: *Ok on March 22. I sleep on your house. Beausce Susan tell my mom dad. Love Amy*

Example 3: This dialogue between Randy, an older elementary student, and his teacher, ranges from food to football.

11-3
T: *That is a good theory...If I were to eat turkey, then I would become fat. But you know what? I never eat turkey now! Are you surprised? I do not eat turkey or any other kind of meat. Do you know why?*

P.S. But I do love other "Thanksgiving' foods, like:



Because I Love to Be Foot Ball team and I wait to Be in Relsons team Or Watch Foot Ball Mostly I Want to Be Foot Ball team.

11/8 Let me guess: Do you like football? (Ha Ha!)

Now tell me, what position are you interested in playing? Offense or defense? I don't know maBy Quater Back Or Be Rigging I Love to Be Quater Back and I want to Be Quarter Back!

11/9 If you were the quarterback, then you would tell all the other members on the team what to do. You would be the "boss". Would you like being the leader? yes Ga hahaha I thought we are on telipone Right M

Randy develops his own opinions in response to his teacher's questions.

pumpkin pie (mmm!), cranberry sauce (ooob!), stuffing (yummy!), mashed potatoes (aah!), and pumpkin pie (yes!), vegetables (yeah!) peas and onions and cauliflower, and... of course... pumpkin pie (my favorite!). Mmm...maybe I can become fat even if I don't eat turkey. I'd better be careful!

S: *Oh I see you shall eat turkey because thanksgiving's coming halloween's over. Because halloween live on October and thanksgiving live on November. Do you understand me? Ok and I like Dialogue Journals.*

11-4

T: *Yes, Andy, I know that Thanksgiving happens in November, but I do not think you understood me! I said I am a vegetarian and so I do not eat meat (turkey included). Got it now?*

P.S. I like the Dialogue Journals, too! It's fun to have a private place to talk about...anything!

S: *Right and many people read our poems and did you know what. Redskins won Redskins score is 45 and St. Louis's score is 7 and Redskins won and St. Louis lost. Do you want to be football team? I do. On Augst I will be football team in Augst and I love to football team because I love to be football team and I want to be on Redskins team or watch football. Mostly I want to be football team.*

11-8

T: *Let me guess: do you like football? (Ha Ha!) Now tell me, what position are you interested in playing? Offense or defense?*

S: *I don't know mabye quaterback or PC Riggins I love to be quaterback and I want to be quaterback!*

11-9

T: *If you were the quarterback, then you would tell all the other members on the team what to do. You would be the "boss." Would you like being the leader?*

S: *Yes GA hahaha. I thought we are on teliphone right*

now (GA is a TDD expression that means "go ahead," or "your turn to talk.") And I will pass the ball to other players but quarterback cannot run or let other team take your or you beter pass fast to your team players only one players from your team.

II-10

T: *I thought the quarterback could run with the ball sometimes and try to score a touchdown. But you are right.... It's not a good idea to let the other team tackle you. How many points do you get for a touchdown?*

S: *I mean I will play foot ball team in aust next week in aust. But right now I play scocer team this year and yesterday I won yesterday. Do you know what score my team score is 4 other team score is 1 and we won! And I was deres the goal and my team goalie mised the ball and they did not make goal. I know what hapen I kick it far away and my team kick in the goal and win one point and...*

Example 4: Nancy, a high school student, discusses with her teacher the experience of being a deaf student.

S: *Have you every go to public school in your life before or not? How did you learn sign language?*

T: *I went to public school until college. Then I went to Gally (Gallaudet). A deaf man taught me to sign.*

S: *Really, which do you like the best sign language or speaking? Is it hard for you to understand what the teacher say to you, I mean lip reading?*

T: *I prefer sign language! It has become my chosen language. I used to get real frustrated in school because I had a hard time understanding! What about you?*

S: *Of course, that's the reason I came here it's more earier for me to understand sign language than speech-read I mean reading lips all the time. Have you any trouble with your teacher while in class?*

T: *I didn't really have a lot of trouble with my teachers, but my 4th grade teacher really felt deaf people were retarded. She wanted to have me moved to a school for the retarded. My mother became furious and had me moved out of her class! Other than that, nothing much happened. Did you have any problems?*

S: *W'ell, yes, it was the teacher who doesn't know anything about deaf people so I tried to explain to her and students but we don't have not time anyway. That's why I came here. How many years have you been working here?*

T: *I'm glad you came here. Do you like it so far? This is my 6th year at MSSD. I taught before at another school for 8-1/2 years. I really like it here!*

S: *I really like it here cuz it really help me alot cuz reading lips is really very difficult for me to understand. Sign language helps me a lot....*

T: *I agree about sign language! I've become a much happier person since I learned to sign....*

S: *Have you been teacher for a long time? I mean in different school.*

T: *I taught at _____ for 8-1/2 years and this is my 6th year at MSSD. Is that a long time?*

S: *Gosh, that's a long time!*

T: *Yes, it seems so! My first third grade class is at Gallaudet College now!! It makes me wonder where the years went!*

S: *My mom teaches 1st grade. She really enjoy it. She teachers hearing kids. When I go home on Oct. 18 I will to see my moms students at her school.*

T: *I can understand why your mom would enjoy that! Six year old kids are a lot of fun and eager to learn! I used to teach 3rd grade and really loved it.*

S: *But still the reason why she teachers 1st grade cuz she loves to see cute little kids that ugly kids in 4 or 5 grade classes. Big Deal. but that her problem not mine.*

T: *Hey! My daughter is in the fourth grade!! Are you saying she's ugly? I certainly disagree!!! And if 4th or 5th graders are ugly, what are high school students? Monsters?*

S: *No. I mean 1st and kindergarten are cuter than older student. I am not say your daughter is ugly. I mean the older kids are pain in the neck. It will give mom a hard time to make them pay attention. Same as you but mom want to take a lot of time doing alot of work.*

T: *Ha! I think in some ways it's harder to teach young children than high school students. For example, younger students are more likely to cry. I really wouldn't want to put up with that.*

S: *But still its my moms feeling about little kids and I heard that no one cry in her class all month long but still its my moms problems and you have many different reason than you do. Anyway not my problem either you!!*

T: *Oh, I agree! Everyone has their own preference! It's a good thing that all of us like different things. If everyone wanted to teach 1st grade, who would be left to teach you? There are pros and cons for teaching all age levels. Frankly, I've enjoyed each level I have taught for different reasons.*

S: *Oh I see! Am I improving my grades?*

Appendix C

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